

# The First Church

# FAMILY

*The First Church in Albany • Founded in 1642  
Reformed Church in America  
May 2020*

## **WORSHIP:**

Sundays at 10:30 A.M. Drive-in Worship Service (May 3<sup>rd</sup> Communion)

### **FROM PASTOR MASHONA**

#### **A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL**

This week we learned of the passing of another great member and leader of our community. First, our beloved Alan Janssen, a General Synod professor emeritus and our very own theologian in residence died on April 3, 2020 due to complications from the corona virus. Now, our previous senior minister Gregg Mast died on Monday afternoon, April 27, 2020 at Albany Medical Center Hospital, Albany, New York. As you know The Reverend Gregg Alan Mast, Ph.D. was president emeritus of New Brunswick Theological Seminary and General Synod Professor emeritus of the Reformed Church in America\*.

Many of you have shared your memories of both men with me on the phone and social media. It is especially challenging when your pastor from childhood departs this life. Perhaps Gregg baptized you or officiated your wedding. Maybe he counseled you in moments of grief. Maybe years of his sermons helped shape your faith. Whatever the encounter, I am sure you were blessed!

I count myself fortunate as well. I was familiar with both Al and Gregg from New Brunswick Seminary. However, it was after my arrival here at First Church in Albany that I began to feel blessed by their presence and wisdom. Slowly and gently as ambassadors for Christ they reached out to me. Neither wanting to be intrusive offered their knowledge, time, and experience. Boy am I glad, that I decided my first 90 days would focus on listening and not conquering! In that short time, we had several conversations over meals, coffee, tea, in the office and over the phone. Al with his booming voice in contrast to Gregg's quieter one. What a blessing! With Gregg, I was inspired and encouraged by the love he expressed for all of you at First Church. He so wanted FCIA to thrive and meet the challenges of this present age. With a pastor's heart Gregg was in favor a progress. Sometimes I wondered if I was progressive enough! He shared some of his challenges and successes in ministry to encourage me. When FCIA moved to Drive-In worship as a response to COVID-19, Gregg mailed me his gloves so my hands would not freeze

while preaching outside. These gloves were given to him years ago by the Drive-In and worship committee. I still have not been able to bring myself to wear them.

Gregg understood that the facility was closed, but the work of the church must continue. During our first conversation Gregg shared how special the plaque in the parish house was to him. It was dedicated after the completion of the parish house with elevators and new entrance, etc. My heart leaped to discover the plaque was a call to prayer. What?!! As many of you know I have done extensive study on prayer. Prayer is the bedrock to my ministry as a pastor and chaplain.

The plaque reads:

**“FOR MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL PEOPLES.”**

**ISAIAH 56:7**

**DEDICATED: NOVEMBER 20, 1988**

As you grieve the loss of your former pastor and resident theologian, please **HEAR** this call to pray. I can see the fulfillment of Gregg Mast’s intentions in our present practice as people of faith. FCIA is a house of prayer for all. I see people praying together at 12 noon remotely on Wednesdays. Post stay-at-home orders, I see folks gathered in Clee Park to pray. I see people sitting on the grass outside the church praying. I see “all peoples” in Stephen James Chapel and in the sanctuary praying. Can you see it? Will you join? Will you pray? Will you commit to praying as a way of your Christian life?

Centering Prayer Suggested Steps:

1. Sit comfortably and choose a sacred word (Many choose *Jesus*)
2. Open with *The Lord’s Prayer, 23rd Psalm, or Psalm 91.*
3. Enter the silence for 5 minutes to start building up to at least 20 in the future.
4. Your sacred word is not a chant. The word is to help you center.
5. Close with *The Lord’s Prayer, 23rd Psalm, or Psalm 91*

You have my permission to weep, to feel loss, to simply “be”. Psalm 46:10 - *Be still and know that I am God.*

\* <https://www.nbts.edu/memoriam-gregg-alan-mast/>



After 8 years **Rev. Sue Vincent Cox** will continue in her ministry beyond First Church in Albany. Over the years she has taught, nurtured, provided counseling, and guidance. We thank God for her and invite you to bless her in her final weeks as part of our staff. Feel free to share with Sue in card, email, or phone the many ways she has blessed you. She will preach on June 7, 2020 at our 10:30am Drive-In Worship. Please join us!



## **WEATHERVANES –**

Due to COVID-19, the traditional May Old Friends' Luncheon has been canceled. If conditions permit, our next meeting will be in September. Details to be determined.

Have a safe and healthy summer!



## **MUSIC CORNER**

So here we are in the midst of Covid-19 –  
Drive-In worship,  
Social distancing,  
No choir,  
No sanctuary services.

It's a scary, uncertain time. Maybe a time to mourn our losses, but maybe it's also a breather – a time to dream, to vision, to think outside the box.

### **We've tried some things –**

A mini Easter service on YouTube  
A mini Children's message on YouTube  
New Musicians  
Distributing texts for the Drive-In music

### **Where we go from here?**

Spring Fling Concerts (in the sanctuary)?  
Summer in the City Concerts (in Clee Park)?  
Jazz at the Drive-in?

### **What are your dreams for music at First Church?**

Send us your ideas and we can dream and plan together.

Peter Pagerey, Chair of the Worship Commission [ppagerey@nycap.rr.com](mailto:ppagerey@nycap.rr.com)

Mary Bon, Minister of Music [Firstchurchmeb@gmail.com](mailto:Firstchurchmeb@gmail.com)

Cheryl Gowie, Chair, Music Task Force [cheryl3178@gmail.com](mailto:cheryl3178@gmail.com)

The Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston, [mwalston@firstchurchinalbany.org](mailto:mwalston@firstchurchinalbany.org)

### **Choir on Hiatus**

With the need to observe social distancing and the difficulty of distance rehearsing our choir is on temporary on hiatus. We are busy planning alternate music for our 10:30 am Drive-In Services on Sunday. See you there!

### **May Worship Musicians Schedule**

We'll be having both a soloist and an instrumentalist for the Drive-In Worship Services. Due to the need for Social Distancing, and the inability to distance three people in the pulpit, we may not have an instrumentalist if it is raining or threatening rain.

- May 3            Soloist Malcolm Moran  
Instrumentalist Doug Persons, Trumpet
- May 10          Soloist David Bon-Keen  
Instrumentalist David Bon-Keen, Bassoon
- May 17          Soloist Joyce Cockerham  
Instrumentalist Jacqueline Wright, Flute
- May 24          Soloist Malcolm Moran  
Instrumentalist Elli Sol Strizich, French Horn
- May 31          Instrumentalist Gordie Peters, bagpipes

**CENTERING PRAYER – EACH WEDNESDAY VIA CONFERENCE CALL** Wednesdays at 12 PM (425) 436-6200 code: 586376.

#### **FOOD PANTRY**

Effective immediately: Our goal is to continue to provide services with minimal contact.

**HELP WANTED:** Bored out of your mind yet? Here's your chance to get out of the house. The Food Pantry is looking for volunteers on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00-11:30 A.M. The volunteers are adhering to social distancing protocols inside, as well as restricting contact from the outside. For more information call Lorraine Houck at 518-443-0460 or ask a Food Pantry volunteer.



**Staff Comings and Goings:** Please join us in welcoming Rose Hunsberger to our office team. Many of you know Rose from her solos on Sunday's mornings. She is providing office support. Prayers for Rev. Sue Vincent Cox whose last Sunday with us in June 7<sup>th</sup> when she will bless us as our morning preacher. Also, join us in prayers for Valerie Williams our former Parish Administrator. We wish her the best in future endeavors.

#### **NOTE FROM CONSISTORY:**

Please note under the direction of the consistory of FCIA with a desire to keep everyone safe, we no longer will collect an in-person offering. We are encouraging everyone to give via mail and online giving. Also, for the Lord's Supper we are asking everyone to bring their own bread and juice from home for the supper. These changes are challenging for us all, so let us continue to pray for one another and the worship service.



REMEMBER TO BLESS AS MANY PEOPLE AS YOU CAN.  
HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY!