

*Jesus...*  
HOPE IS BORN



# THE FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY

(Reformed Church in America)

110 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207 ~ (518) 463-4449 ☎

Email: firstchurch@verizon.net ~ Website: www.firstchurchinalbany.org ~ Sunday Worship: 10:30 am

## 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 all are loved.*

## Christmas Eve 2016

7:00 p.m.

### THE APPROACH TO GOD

Prelude      Carols for Violin, Violoncello and Bassoon  
*Messiah* (excerpts)      Georg Friedrich Handel  
*Pifa; There Were Shepherds; Glory to God; Rejoice Greatly*

The Lighting of the Sanctuary Candles

Choir Carol    *Mary, Mary, Where Is Your Baby?*      Jester Hairston

The Lighting of the Christ Candle

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**Those who lived in a land of deep darkness,  
on them light has shined.**

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders.

**And he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

In him is life and the life is the light of all people.

**The light shines in the darkness  
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

\*The Hymn 41 *O Come, All Ye Faithful*

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,  
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem!  
Come, and behold Him, born the King of angels:**

*Refrain: O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

**Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be all glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing!**

*Refrain*

**Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation!  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest!**

*Refrain*

Greeting

Micah 5: 2-5 The Prophet Micah Tells of the Coming Messiah

Carol 44 (verses 1, 3 & 4) *O Little Town of Bethlehem*

ST. LOUIS

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light;  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

**How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.  
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel!**

Luke 1:26-38 The Angel Gabriel Visits the Virgin Mary

Choir Carol: *Ave Maria* (Hail, Mary, full of grace)

Javier Busto

Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women,  
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for  
us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.

Luke 2: 1-5 Joseph and Mary Seek Shelter in Bethlehem

Dialogue: “Searching for Shelter”

As Joseph and Mary search for shelter the choir will sing verses from the carol,  
*Born in the Night, Mary's Child* (# 30 in the hymnal). The congregation is invited  
to join in singing verse 4.

Choir Carol: *Born in the Night, Mary's Child*

Born in the night, Mary's Child,  
a long way from your home;  
coming in need, Mary's Child,  
born in a borrowed room.

Clear shining light, Mary's Child,  
your face lights up our way;  
light of the world, Mary's Child,  
dawn on our darkened day.

Truth of our life, Mary's Child,  
you tell us God is good;  
prove it is true, Mary's Child,  
go to your cross of wood.

Luke 2: 6-7 Jesus Is Born at Bethlehem

Carol 30 *Born in the Night, Mary's Child* (Verse 4)  
(Choir and congregation)

MARY'S CHILD

**Hope of the world, Mary's Child,  
you're coming soon to reign;  
King of the earth, Mary's Child,  
walk in our streets again.**

Luke 2: 8-20 The Birth Is Announced to Shepherds

Carol 23 *Angels We Have Heard on High*

GLORIA

**Angels we have heard on high, singing sweetly o'er the plains,  
And the mountains in reply echoing their joyous strains.**

*Refrain: Gloria, in excelsis Deo!  
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

**Shepherds, why this jubilee? Why your joyous strains prolong?  
What the gladsome tidings be Which inspire your heavenly song?**

*Refrain*

**Come to Bethlehem and see Him whose birth the angels sing;  
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.**

*Refrain*

Sermon "The Stranger at the Door"

Carol 60 *Silent Night, Holy Night* (verses 1-3)  
**Silent night! Holy night! All is calm, all is bright,  
Round yon virgin mother and child!  
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,  
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.**

STILLE NACHT



**Joy to the world! The Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing, and heaven and nature sing,  
And heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.**

**Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!  
Let us our songs employ;  
While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains  
Repeat the sounding joy, repeat the sounding joy,  
Repeat, repeat the sounding joy.**

**No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found, far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as the curse is found.**

**He rules the world with truth and grace,  
And makes the nations prove  
The glories of his righteousness,  
And wonders of his love, and wonders of his love,  
And wonders, wonders of his love.**

\*Benediction

\*Postlude *In Dulci Jubilo*

Johann Sebastian Bach

ΑΩ \*Those who are able please stand

Welcome to the Festival of the Nativity at First Church. From the ministers and staff of First Church comes the fond hope that the celebration of the birth of Christ may be for you a time of reflection and renewal. May God grant you a joyous Christmas and a blessed New Year. For those seated in the balcony, hymnals are available from the ushers.

Everyone is invited to Wassail Hour downstairs in Zimmerman Hall following the service. The coordinators of this year's Wassail Hour are: Rebecca Mondore, James Folts, Tom Allison.

**Candle lighters:** Caleb Brewer, James Robinson, Imani Brewer, Joshua Bliss, Haleigh Bliss, Kaitlyn Bliss, Mackenzie Brewer and Saniyah Bell. **Readers:** Meredith Parmalee, William Lawrence, Kokese Ballou. In the role of Joseph and Mary: Joshua Bliss and Mackenzie Brewer. The voices of Joseph and the innkeepers: Peter Pagerey, Andrew Mondore, and Marilyn Paarlberg; Preacher: The Rev. John D. Paarlberg.

**The Choir of First Church: Sopranos:** Ella Campbell, Cheryl Gowie, Rose Hunsberger, Jean Lamere, Denise Wright, Audrey Ming. **Altos:** Norma Jean Ballou, Becky Hudak, Marilyn Paarlberg. **Tenors:** David Bon-Keen, David Bradley. **Baritones:** Michael Dudek, Cliff Lamere, Ian Leet, Wayne Sivaslian, Peter Subers.

**Guest Instrumentalists:** Liz Silver, violin; Jay Schulman, violincello; Eric Latini, Doug Persons, trumpets; David Bon-Keen, bassoon, timpani. **Soloists:** Rose Hunsberger, soprano; David Bon-Keen, tenor; Peter Subers, baritone. Organist/Choir Director: Mary Bon.

**The dialogue, “Searching for Shelter,”** is based on *Los Posadas* (Service of Shelter for the Holy Family), a tradition in Latin American countries, especially Mexico. Each night from December 16 to 24 two people dress up as Mary and Joseph (others dressed as shepherds & wise men & angels join them on the way) and visit a house designated to be an “inn” (thus the name “Posada”). At each house, the resident responds by singing a song and when Mary and Joseph are finally recognized and allowed to enter, the group of guests comes into the home and kneels around the Nativity scene to pray. At the end of each night's journey, people sing Christmas carols, children break open star-shaped piñatas and the entire group joins in a celebratory meal. The practice was originated by the Augustinian Father Diego de Soria around 1587.

**Christmas Eve Offering:** The Board of Deacons has designated the 2016 Christmas offering for two ministries:

- Toward the support of Maggie (Busman) and Jason White who are working with orphaned, abandoned and socially disadvantaged children in a resident care youth home in Romania.
- The Emergency Overflow Shelter, offering housing for men during the winter months.

**Christmas Day Worship 10:30 a.m.** A service of carols and readings with excerpts from some of Martin Luther's Christmas sermons.

**New Year's Day Worship:** Come ring in the New Year by singing carols and ringing bells. Do you have a family heirloom bell? An old cow bell? Bring your bells to worship on Sunday, January 1 at 10:30 a.m. If you have a bell to share, bring it! We'll have some extra bells if you can't bring a bell of your own.