

# Advent

At First Church in Albany



Sunday, December 20, 2020  
10am ZOOM Online Service

Join us for this season of expectation!

First Church in Albany

Senior Minister Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston

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

FOR NOTHING IS  
IMPOSSIBLE WITH GOD

L u k e 1 : 3 7

Prelude  
Aria

**“Messiah: Rejoice Greatly”**  
*Rose Hunsberger, soprano; Mary Bon, organ*

G.F. Handel

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;  
Behold, thy king cometh unto thee. He is the righteous Savior,  
And He shall speak peace unto the heaven. (*Zechariah 9:9, 10*)

Welcome & Announcements

Call to Worship\*

Our souls magnify the Lord,  
And our spirits rejoice in God our Savior.  
**God has looked with favor  
On the lowliness of God’s servant.**  
God’s mercy is for those who fear him  
From generation to generation.  
**God has shown strength with God’s arm.  
God has scattered the proud  
In the thoughts of their hearts.**  
God has brought down the powerful from their thrones,  
And lifted up the lowly;  
**God has filled the hungry with good things,  
And sent the rich away empty.**  
Come, for God is doing a new thing!  
Come, let us worship God!  
\*re-worshipblogspot.com/stephenfearing.com

Carol

**“The Angel Gabriel from Heaven Came”** GABRIEL’S MESSAGE  
*The First Church Choir; Mary Bon, director*

The angel Gabriel from heaven came, his wings as drifted snow,  
His eyes as flame; “All hail,” said he, “thou lowly maiden, Mary,  
Most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

“For know a blessed Mother thou shalt be, all generations laud and honor  
thee, Thy Son shall be Emmanuel, by seers foretold,  
Most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

Then gentle Mary meekly bowed her head,  
“To me be as it pleases God,” she said, “my soul shall laud and magnify  
His holy Name.”  
Most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel, the Christ was born in Bethlehem, all on a Christmas  
Morn, And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,  
“Most highly favored lady.” Gloria!

*Words: Basque carol; para. Sabine Baring-Gould (19thC)  
Music: Basque carol; harm. Edgar Pettman (10thC)*

## Lighting of the Advent Candles



- *Reader 1:* O God, we light the fourth candle of Advent.  
(With the first three candles burning, a family member lights the fourth candle.)
- *Reader 2:* We hear your angel Gabriel and witness the faith of Mary. Fill us with your grace and light. We recall the times we have struggled but said yes. We know times when God has filled us and our world with blessings.
- *Reader 1:* Mary was a young, strong, spiritual woman. Even though her life was not easy, she heard God's voice and said yes. Her song was a prayer that would uplift those who were downtrodden. Her lyrics shattered the proud and called the world to change. She would bear within her the promised child, Jesus, the Light of the World. This Advent, we respond to God's beckoning to us as well.
- *Reader 2 :* Revealing God, visit us and fill us with your Spirit. Bring your good news to life within us. Give us the courage to carry your light into the injustices and shadows of this world. Amen.
- *People (sing):* O' Come Emmanuel

Hymn Response                      “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” VS. 3    VENI EMMANUEL  
*Choir and Congregation of First Church; Mary Bon, organist*

O come, Desire of nations, bind All peoples in one heart and mind;  
Bid envy, strife, and discord cease; Fill the whole world with heaven's peace.

Refrain: Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

## Prayer of Confession

Lord of Christmas peace,  
We have done wrong.  
We have tarnished the gift you gave freely.  
We have buried you so deeply in our hearts,  
The world doesn't see you.  
We have not followed Christ,  
We have ignored your teachings,  
We have lived lives of apathy against your love,  
We have built fences and fortresses to push people away,  
And we have silenced the screams of those in need.  
Forgive us, we pray.  
Free us from our sin,  
Free us from our captivity,  
Free us to a life lived in joy  
Through Jesus Christ Our Lord.  
Amen

*The Rev. Nathan Decker*

Assurance of Pardon

God, our kind and loving Savior God, has stepped in and saved us.

*(Adapted from Titus 3:4-7, The Message)*

Carol

***“People Look East the Time is Near”***

BESANÇON

People, look east and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way.

Furrows, be glad. Though earth is bare,  
One more seed is planted there: Give up your strength the seed to nourish,  
That in course the flower may flourish.

People, look east and sing today: Love, the rose, is on the way.

Birds, though you long have ceased to build,  
Guard the nest that must be filled. Even the hour when wings are frozen  
God for fledging time has chosen.

People, look east and sing today: Love, the bird, is on the way.

Stars, keep watch. When night is dim  
One more light the bowl shall brim, shining beyond the frosty weather,  
Bright as sun and moon together.

People, look east and sing today: Love, the star, is on the way.

Angels, announce with shouts of mirth  
Christ who bring new life to earth. Set every peak and valley humming  
With the word, the Lord is coming.

People, look east and sing today: Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Prayer of Illumination

**Eternal God, in the reading of the Scripture, may your word be heard; in the meditation of our hearts, may your word be known; and in the faithfulness of our lives, may your word be shown. Amen.**

Gospel Reading

**Luke 1:26-38**

- <sup>26</sup> In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth,
- <sup>27</sup> to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.
- <sup>28</sup> And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."
- <sup>29</sup> But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.
- <sup>30</sup> The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
- <sup>31</sup> And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.
- <sup>32</sup> He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David.
- <sup>33</sup> He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
- <sup>34</sup> Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"
- <sup>35</sup> The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.
- <sup>36</sup> And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren.
- <sup>37</sup> For nothing will be impossible with God."
- <sup>38</sup> Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The Gospel Lesson  
The Gospel of the Lord  
**Praise to you, O Christ**

Sermon

***Impossible and Barren***

The Prayer for Blessing on the Word

Lord's Prayer

Josh Bliss

**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, for ever. Amen.**

Hymn

***“Lift Up Your Heads”***

TRURO

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates; behold, the King of glory waits;  
the King of kings is drawing near;  
the Savior of the world is here!

Fling wide the portals of your heart; make it a temple, set apart  
from earthly use for heaven's employ,  
adorned with prayer and love and joy.

Redeemer, come, with us abide; our hearts to thee we open wide;  
let us thy inner presence feel;  
thy grace and love in us reveal.

Charge & Blessing