



**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.*

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**Prelude Reflection** Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

A charge to keep - we have to serve this present age.

**Prelude**

*"Retrospection"*

F. Price

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

**Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing** *Numbers 6: 24-26*

"May the Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine upon you,  
And be gracious to you;  
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you,  
And give you peace." **Amen.**

**Call to Worship** *based on Charles B. Cotton, Jr. excerpts from Dr. MLK's "I Have a Dream Speech"*



Some of you have come here today to worship the Lord. You know the Lord is strong and mighty. Some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Very few know of the troubles you have seen. You are veterans of redemptive suffering. Because of the Lord, you are veterans living with post-traumatic resilience.

**We are gathered here today to look up unto the hills from where our help comes. Our help comes from the Lord!**

Looking up to God who is, was, and ever shall be, let freedom ring! Let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire! Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York! Let freedom ring from inside of The First Church in Albany! Let freedom ring from within my soul.

**Together we sing, "My country, 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."**

When we allow freedom to ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, Jews, and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, Israelis and Palestinians, Russians and Ukrainians, Africans, Asians, and Europeans will be able to join hands and shout a new truth:

**"Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty we are free at last.**

**\*Opening Hymn**      *“Make Me a Channel of Your Peace”*      (see insert)

## **Prayer of Confession**

Jesus responded: ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart soul and mind’. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

**Dear Lord, forgive us for the times we have our neighbors. Forgive for the times when we feared and devalued them for their differences.**

*Time of silence*

## **Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law** *Galatians 3:28*

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

## **\*Passing the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

**People: And also with you.**

Leader: Let us rise to greet one another with the peace of Christ.

## **Children’s Message & Blessing** *Diversity Storybook*

## **Children’s Moment Song**

*“We Stand with Those Excluded”*      (see insert)

## **Prayer for Illumination** *Please sing*

**Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me. Melt me. Mold me. Fill me. Use me. Spirit of the Living God, fall afresh on me!**

## **Sermon Text**

*Galatians 5:1-18*

For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.

Listen! I, Paul, am telling you that, if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no benefit to you. Once again I testify to every man who lets himself be circumcised that he is obliged to obey the entire law. You who want to be reckoned as righteous by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. For through the Spirit, by faith, we eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything; the only thing that counts is faith working through love.

You were running well; who prevented you from obeying the truth? Such persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. A little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough. I am confident about you in the Lord that you will not think otherwise. But whoever it is that is confusing you will pay the penalty. But my brothers and sisters, why am I still being persecuted if I am still preaching circumcision? In that case the offense of the cross has been removed. I wish those who unsettle you would castrate themselves!

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become enslaved to one another. For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## **Sermon**

*There is No Just-Us*

## **A Prayer of Blessing on the Word**

**\*Hymn of Response**     *"O God, We Own Our Failures"*     (see insert)

**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**

*"I Come with Joy, a Child of God"*

arr. E. Butler

## **\*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

*"Let Us Build a House"*

*(see insert)*

### \*Closing Prayer For the Diversity of Races and Cultures

O God, as we move from this place. Bless us to accept your deliberate act of creating all people in your image.  
We thank you for the astonishing variety of races and cultures in this world.  
Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of friendship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Based on *Lutheran Book of Worship: Minister's Desk Edition*,  
(Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978)

### Postlude

*"We Shall Overcome"*

A. Hailstork



Note: If you would like to purchase and donate a coat for a child of any age, as well as hats and gloves/mittens for children and adults, please bring these items to the church. We have found the need to be great at both the pantry and on Thursday at Soup & Sandwiches in the Park. Join us as we care for our neighbors during the cold winter months.

**Preacher:** Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston

**Liturgist:** Rev. Trey Tirpak

**Organist:** Itke Prins

**Audio/Visual:** Joshua Bliss, Stephen Reohr

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# For Racial Harmony

God and Father of all,  
in your love  
you made all the nations of the world  
to be a family,  
and your Son taught us to love one another.  
Yet our world is riven apart  
with prejudice, arrogance, and pride.  
Help the different races  
to love and understand one another better.  
Increase among us sympathy,  
tolerance, and goodwill,  
that we may learn to appreciate the gifts  
that other races bring to us,  
and to see in all people  
our brothers and sisters for whom Christ died.  
Save us from jealousy, hatred, and fear,  
and help us to live together  
as members of one family at home in the world,  
sons and daughters of one Father  
who live in the liberty of the children of God;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
Book of Common Order of the Church of Scotland  
(Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1994)





# Prayers, Concerns & Joys

- 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](mailto:office@firstchurchinalbany.org) or call the office at 518-463-4449



# January 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
31 January 7, Witness of Baptism Service First United Methodist of Delmar 1pm	1 Pantry & Office Closed	2 	3 	4 Viewing & Funeral 9:30am Potluck & First Thursday Night of Worship	5	6
7 <i>M</i> Communion Sunday  Deco Teardown	8 Prayer Shawl Meeting	9 	10 	11 	12	13
14 	15 MLK Jr. Day Pantry & Office Closed MLK Jr. Interfaith Celebration 7pm	16 Consistory Meeting	17 Weathervanes	18 	19	20
21 Trustees Meeting	22 	23 	24 	25 		27
28 Congregational Meeting	29 	30 	31 			



**Key:**

Indoor Worship 10am

Communion Sunday

Coffee Hour

Pantry 9am

Centering Prayer 12pm

Book Study

Soup & PB&J 11:30am

Choir Rehearsal

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



## First Church in Albany

110 North Pearl St.  
Albany NY 12207  
518-463-4449

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



# Celebrating Dr. King

**January 15, 7 pm**

First Church in Albany (Reformed)

**Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston of**

**Sr. Minister FCIA to Speak**



For over fifty years the Capital Area Council of Churches has celebrated Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday. In recognition of this day, the Council sponsors an Interfaith Celebration that aims to remind us of Rev. King's legacy as well as raise scholarship funds for deserving high school seniors.

The 2024 Celebration will be held on January 15, 7 pm at the First Church in Albany. Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston of First Church will be the speaker.

110 North Pearl St., Albany NY 12207 518-463-4449

## ***Music Notes*** from Iteke Prins

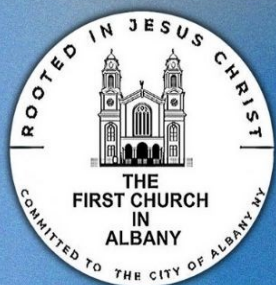
In honor of Justice Sunday, music director Iteke Prins chose the prelude and the postlude from a wealth of African American Composers.

**Prelude:** "Retrospection" By Florence Price 1887-1953.

She was the first Afro-American woman to her symphony performed by a major American Orchestra ( Chicago Symphony Orchestra). She has composed over 300 major works, both vocal and instrumental.

**Postlude:** "We Shall Overcome" By Adolphus Hailstork.

Dr. Hailstork, and Afro-American, is an internationally known composer, and educator. He lived in Albany and went to Albany High School, and as a student started a Glee Club there. He was much admired by the music teachers. The award winning Dr Hailstork has a diverse catalog of compositions written for orchestra, chorus, solo voice, piano, organ, various chamber ensembles, band ,orchestra, and opera. His works have been played by major orchestra around the world.



# Congregational Meeting

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

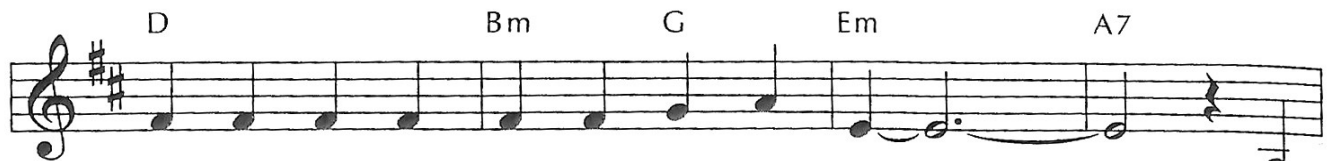
# Make Me a Channel of Your Peace

## Prayer of St. Francis



1 Make me a chan-nel of your peace.  
2 Make me a chan-nel of your peace.  
4 Make me a chan-nel of your peace.

Where  
Where  
It



there is ha-tred, let me bring your love.  
there's de-spair in life, let me bring hope.  
is in par-don-ing that we are par-doned,

Where  
Where  
in

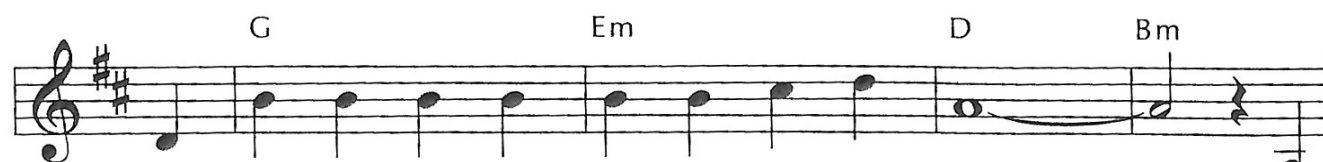


there is in-ju-ry, your par-don, Lord,  
there is dark-ness, on-ly light,  
giv-ing of our-selves that we re-ceive,

and  
and  
and in



where there's doubt, true faith in you.  
where there's sad-ness, ev-er joy.  
dy-ing that we're born to e-ter-nal life.



3 O, Mas-ter, grant that I may nev-er seek

so



much to be con-soled, as to con-sole,

to be



G                      Em                      F#m                      Bm

un - der - stood,      as to un - der - stand,      to be

E                      E7                      A                      E                      A                      A7

loved,      as to love, with all my soul.

to Stanza 4

*Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.*

Though popular opinion credits this prayer to Francis of Assisi, the earliest known printing was in a French religious magazine in 1912. Yet that gentle saint's spirit seems evident in these words, a quality that has spurred many paraphrases and musical settings such as this one.

TEXT: Anon., c. 1912; adapt. Sebastian Temple, 1967  
 MUSIC: Sebastian Temple, 1963; arr. Alfred V. Fedak, 2011  
 Text and Music © 1967 OCP

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS  
 Irregular



# We stand With Those Excluded

Edith Sinclair Downing

76 76D

Iteke Prins 2023

EXCLUDED

1. We stand with those ex - clu - ded, with  
2. We grieve our cul - tures bi - as a -  
3. We each have gifts to of - fer to

those who need to know God's care that Christ  
gainst di - ver - si - ty, for the gift of cre -  
share the Spi - rit's power. Help us to find to -

has taught us and trus - ted us to know. O  
a - tion in - cludes va - ri - e - ty. Help  
ge - ther new ways for hope to flow - er. We

love that has nio li - mit, you of - fer your em - brace; help  
us as your own fam' - ly, to live the faith we own, as -  
Ce - le - brate our cal - ling to be your church to - day. Let

us to be more faith - ful in this our time and place.  
sur - ing ev' - ry per - son they do not walk a - lone.  
us, Christ's liv - ing bo - dy, now live the words we pray.



# O God, We Own Our Failures

Edith Sinclair Downing5

76 76D

Iteke Prins

FAILURE

1. O God, we own our fail - ure to  
2. When - pa - rents lose their wa - ges, when  
3. Free us to live your chal - lunge to

3

share your love each day. When we see home-less peo - ple, we  
chil - dren long for food, can we who are the pri - vi - leged be  
make a feast for all, give wel - come to a stran - ger, be -

7

hur - ry on our way. Urge us to stop and lis - ten, re -  
their be - a - ti - tude? We can change hurt - ful sys - tems that  
friend both great and small. As we break bread, you join us, and

11

mem - bring Je - sus care. A - wa - ken us to tend those now  
by our sins sur - vived, and work to has - ten jus - tice for  
help us act as yeast to raise fresh bread for sha - ring with

15

suf - fer - ing des - pair.  
those whose hope has died.  
those who are the least.

Topic: Witnessing  
Source: Matthew 25: 40

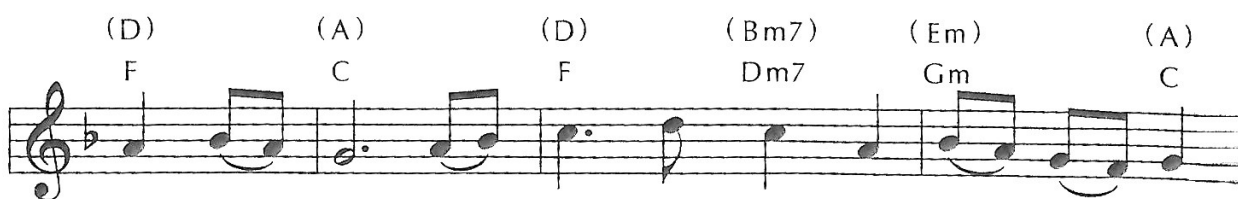
# Let Us Build a House

## All Are Welcome

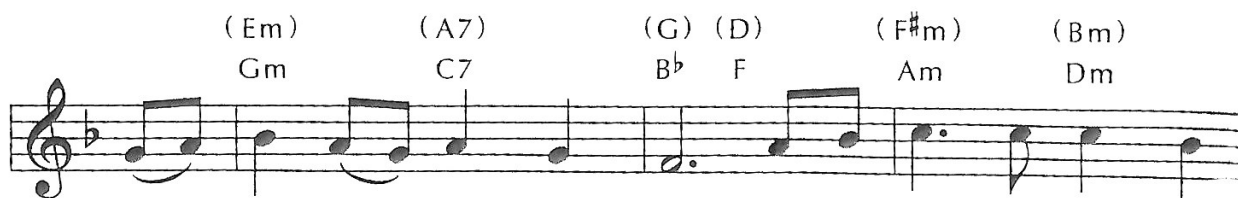
Capo 3: (A7) (D) (A) (D) (G) (A) (Bm)  
C7 F C F B<sup>b</sup> C Dm



1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can  
2 Let us build a house where proph - ets speak, and words are  
3 Let us build a house where love is found in wa - ter,  
4 Let us build a house where hands will reach be - yond the  
5 Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and



safe - ly live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell  
strong and true, where all God's chil - dren dare to seek  
wine, and wheat; a ban - quet hall on ho - ly ground  
wood and stone to heal and strength-en, serve and teach,  
vi - sions heard and loved and trea-sured, taught and claimed



how hearts learn to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and  
to dream God's reign a - new. Here the cross shall stand as  
where peace and jus - tice meet. Here the love of God, through  
and live the Word they've known. Here the out - cast and the  
as words with - in the Word. Built of tears and cries and



vi - sions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the  
wit - ness and as sym - bol of God's grace; here as  
Je - sus, is re - vealed in time and space; we  
strang - er bear the im - age of God's face; let us  
laugh - ter, prayers of faith and songs of grace; let this

*Refrain*

(D) (G) (F#7) (Bm) (Em) (Bm)  
F B $\flat$  A7 Dm Gm Dm

love of Christ shall end di - vi - sions:  
one we claim the faith of Je - sus:  
share in Christ the feast that frees us: all are wel - come;  
bring an end to fear and dan - ger:  
house pro-claim from floor to raf - ter:

(F#m) (Em) (D) (Em) (A7) (D) (G) (D) ((A7))  
Am Gm F Gm C7 F B $\flat$  F (C7)

all are wel - come; all are wel - come in this place.

Although it was written for a church dedication, this text is not about a physical structure but a spiritual one. The building is at best only a vessel for the essential love and hope, life and faith, peace and justice hospitality and nurture that form the worshipping community.