



**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*

Church, a way of joy,
Gathered souls in grace rejoice,
Love's path, our sacred choice.

Prelude

"DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

I. Prins

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

Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing *Romans 15:13*

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." **Amen.**

Advent Anthem “*We Welcome Now the World’s True Light*” v. 1-3 (see insert)

Congregant will share a reflection about peace and light our Advent candles.

Titus 2:11-14

Call to Worship *Based Psalm 30*

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

Amen.

Leader: I will extol you, O Lord!

People: For you have drawn me up and did not let my troubles rejoice over me.

Leader: I cried to you for help,

People: you have healed me, and brought my soul up from out of the depths.

Leader: So we sing praises to, O Lord.

People: For our weeping may linger for the night, but your joy comes in the morning.

Leader: Let us sing praises to God, for the Lord has promised us joy at the end of this advent darkness!

***Opening Hymn** “*With Joy I Heard My Friends Exclaim (SUSSEX CAROL)*” (see insert)

Prayer of Confession *Based on Isaiah 35:1-10*

Lord, in the midst of life's busyness, challenges, and sorrows, we confess our struggle to embrace even the prospect of joy. As Isaiah says, our weary hands, weak knees, and fearful hearts make it hard to believe that joy will come to us. Send your Holy Spirit to give us the eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to embrace the joy of the Lord. Amen.

Time of silence

Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law

In our sermon text today, Isaiah tells us not to fear for God is on the way to save us; God is making a way for joy. Let us wait together for God’s salvation, anticipating the joy of the Lord.

***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 *Simeon & The Best Present Ever*

Prayer for Illumination

Holy Spirit, come. Journey with us, and create within us blissful gratitude — joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Lesson Luke 2:22-32

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord"), and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying,

"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace,
according to your word,
for my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the gentiles
and for glory to your people Israel."

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon Text Isaiah 35:1-10

The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad; the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus it shall blossom abundantly and rejoice with joy and shouting. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God.

Strengthen the weak hands and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, do not fear! Here is your God. God will come with vengeance, with terrible recompense. God will come and save you."

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened; then the [those who are] lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of [those who are] speechless [shall] sing for joy. For waters shall break forth

in the wilderness and streams in the desert; the burning sand shall become a pool, and the thirsty ground, springs of water; the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp; the grass shall become reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not travel on it, but it shall be for God's people; no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray. No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there. And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

Sermon

The Way of Joy

A Prayer of Blessing on the Word

***Hymn of Response** *"View the Present Through The Promise"* (see insert)

Profession of Faith *Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A #26*

Q. What do you believe when you say, "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth"?

A. That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who out of nothing created heaven and earth and everything in them, who still upholds and rules them by his eternal counsel and providence, is my God and Father because of Christ the Son.

I trust God so much that I do not doubt he will provide whatever I need for body and soul, and will turn to my good whatever adversity he sends upon me in this sad world.

God is able to do this because he is almighty God, and desires to do this because he is a faithful Father.

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

"Oh, How Joyfully"
Choir

M. Burkhardt

***Doxology** #592 in pew hymnal

**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.**

Prayers of the People

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 *"This Little Light of Mine"* (see insert)

*Charge & Blessing

Postlude *"Gloria"* I. Prins

*We wish each of you a blessed
week, until we meet again.*



Note: You are invited to join Rev. Trey in the chapel after coffee time to discuss the third week of our Advent devotional book *A Surprising God*.

Minister: Rev. Trey Tirpak

Liturgist: Becky Hudak, Deacon

Consistory Chaplain of the Day: TBD

Organist: Iteke Prins

Musician(s)/Specialist(s): Choir

Audio/Visual: Joshua Bliss, Stephen Reohr


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2023 DECEMBER



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
17  <i>T</i> joy	18 	19  Castle Island Talent Show & Potluck Lunch 10am-1pm Zimmerman	20  AA	21  	22	23
24 Morning 10am  Candlelight Service 7pm followed by Wassail <i>T</i> love	25 Christmas Christmas Morning Worship 10am in the Chapel  Pantry & Office Closed	26	27  AA	28 	29	30
31  	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div> Key:  Indoor Worship 10am  Communion Sunday  Coffee Hour  Pantry 9am  Centering Prayer 12pm  Book Study  Soup & PB&J 11:30am  Choir Rehearsal </div> <div> Preacher: <i>M</i> Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston <i>T</i> Rev. Trey Tirpak <i>G</i> Guest </div> </div>					



Poinsettias


Christmas Eve is just around the corner! We have ordered a limited number of poinsettias for the Sanctuary. We would like to continue the tradition of designating a memorial to be listed in the bulletin for Christmas Eve.

If you wish to designate a memorial to be listed, please email the office at fciaofficemanager@gmail.com or call 518-463-4449 with your designation by Wednesday, December 21.

There is a suggested donation of \$14 a plant and any offering toward their cost would be a blessing. Make checks payable to First Church in Albany (Note: Poinsettias) and mail them to First Church in Albany, 110 North Pearl St., Albany NY 12207 or drop them in the offering, marked attention "office".

Join with Cleo this winter season to help our Friends & neighbors in need of cold weather accessories stay warm when those temps drop!

Let's fill this basket with hats, gloves, mittens and scarves so we can serve our neighbors in need. You can buy them or make them if you are a crafter! We simply ask that all donations are new.



Prayers, Concerns & Joys

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

- Norma McClement
- Mia Westman
- Kathleen Claydon
- Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston
- Requests for the Tirpak Family
 - Trey's uncle, with cancer
 - a family friend, with cancer
 - a family friend who is caring for a terminally ill child
- Marian Lais, our office manager's mother in hospice care
- For the family and friends of Joe Vasta who passed, friend of Doug and Gillian Persons
- Ginny Giguere
- Donna Schultz
- Jeff Curry
- Avery Bradley, granddaughter of Marilyn and David, an athlete continuing her recovery from a leg injury
- From our pantry family, Maureen Jackson and her brother Maurice, both dealing with health issues
- Family of Gillian Persons and for her sister Sylvia
- For Shirley Mockel, good friend of Marilyn Bradley, with health concerns.
- Doug Plummer, friend of the Bradley family, as he begins treatment for health concerns
- Becky Gardner
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, recovering
- Carol LaBatte
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, recovering
- Carol LaBatte
- 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
- Ruth and Josue Torres
- 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 plan Advent
- 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.

Reaching out to Pastor Mashona

We've had some requests regarding contacting Pastor Mashona with get-well cards and Christmas Greetings. We ask you to understand our heart to honor her time away by not distributing her address widely. Anyone who would like to send a card, please drop them off at the office or place them in the offering. They will be collected and sent to Pastor Mashona from the office.



We ask for continued prayers as she takes this time away and as she celebrates this hopeful time in our faith life.

Thank you, The Staff

Soup & Sandwiches
in
Clee Park
Thursdays at 11:30am-1pm

Everyone is welcome and there is no charge for the soup!

#firstchurchinmotion
110 North Pearl St., Albany NY 12207

Worship Events

at the
First Church in Albany

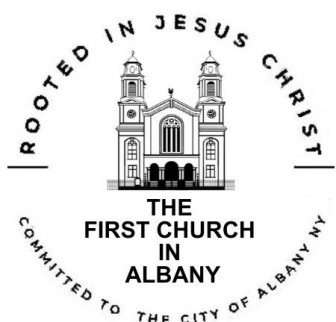
Sunday, Dec. 24, 2023

- **10am** - Sunday Morning Worship
- **7pm** - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service, followed by a Wassail in Zimmerman Hall

Monday, Dec. 25, 2023, 10am

Christmas Morning Worship in the Chapel

www.firstchurchinalbany.org



First Church in Albany

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

www.firstchurchinalbany.org

Choir Offertory, December 17

"Oh, How Joyfully"

Text- J.D. Falk, Music arr. Michael Burkhardt.

Oh, how joyfully, o, how merrily,
Christmas comes with its **LIFE** divine!
Angels, high in glory, chant the Christmas story:
Hail, ye people, hail the joyous Christmas time!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how merrily,
Christmas comes with its **GRACE** divine!
Grace again is beaming, Christ the world redeeming;
Hail, ye people, hail the joyous Christmas time!

Oh, how joyfully, oh, how merrily,
Christmas comes with its **JOY** divine!
Shepherds hear the story, greet the king of glory:
Hail, ye people, hail the joyous Christmas time!



“Thaddeus’ Symbols of Christmas”
by Thaddeus Carr-Morton
Colored Pencil on Paper

We Welcome Now the World's True Light

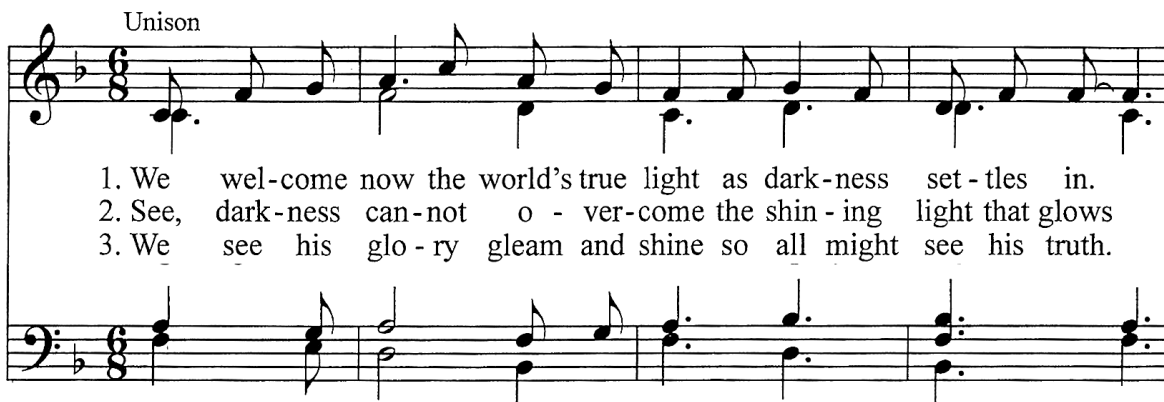
SIMPLE CRÈCHE

86 86 88

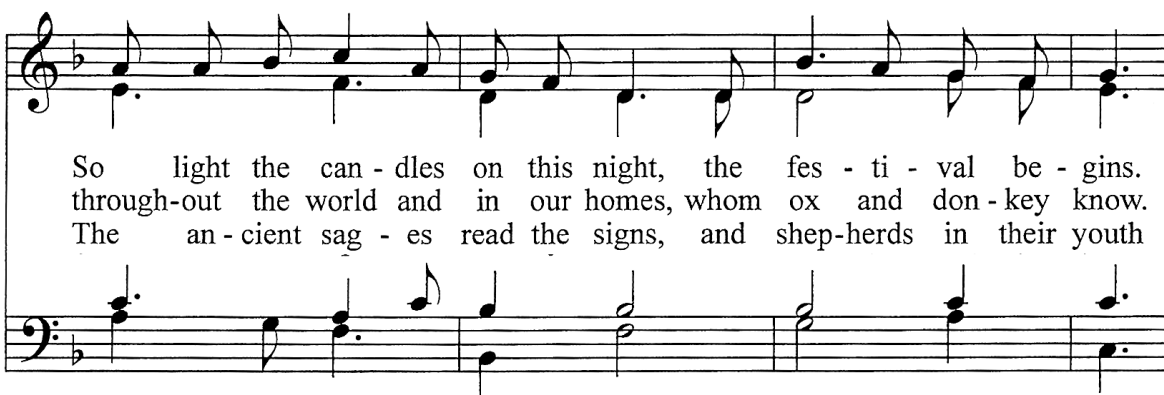
Gracia Grindal (b. 1943)

Iteke Prins

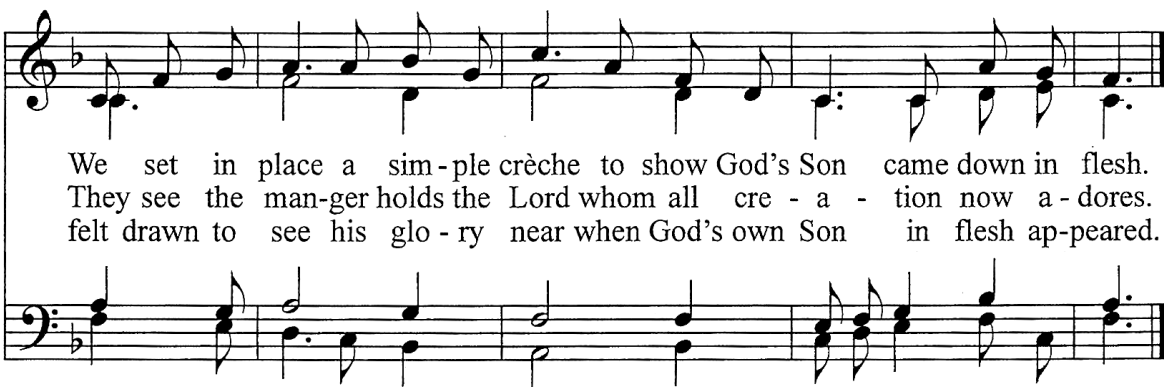
Unison



1. We wel-come now the world's true light as dark-ness set-tles in.
2. See, dark-ness can-not o-ver-come the shin-ing light that glows
3. We see his glo-ry gleam and shine so all might see his truth.



So light the can-dles on this night, the fes-ti-val be-gins.
through-out the world and in our homes, whom ox and don-key know.
The an-cient sag-es read the signs, and shep-herds in their youth



We set in place a sim-ple crèche to show God's Son came down in flesh.
They see the man-ger holds the Lord whom all cre-a-tion now a-dores.
felt drawn to see his glo-ry near when God's own Son in flesh ap-peared.

With Joy I Heard My Friends Exclaim

PSALM 122

1 With joy I heard my friends ex-claim: "Come, let us in God's
 2 How beau - ti - ful does Zi - on stand, a cit - y built com -
 3 They come to learn the will of God, to pay their vows, God's

tem - ple meet." With - in your gates, O Zi - on blest, shall ev - er
 pact and fair; the peo - ple of the Lord u - nite with joy and
 grace to own, for there is judg - ment's roy - al seat, Mes - si - ah's

stand our will - ing feet.
 praise to wor - ship there. Come, let us go to the house of the Lord.
 sure and last - ing throne.

Zi - on, sing; sing out your peace and joy.

4 For Zion's peace let prayers be made;
 may all that love you prosper well!
 Within your walls let peace abide,
 and gladness with your children dwell.
Refrain

5 For love of friends and kindred dear,
 my heart's desire is Zion's peace,
 and for the house of God, the Lord,
 my loving care shall never cease.
Refrain

For other settings of Ps. 122 see 508, 514

Words: Psalter, 1912, alt.; ref. Hal H. Hopson © 2008 Birnamwood Publications, a division of MorningStar Music Publishers, Inc.

Music (SUSSEX CAROL 8.8.8.8 refrain 10.9): English carol; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958), P.D.

View the Present Through the Promise

Unison G Harmony C Am7 D7sus D7

1 View the pres - ent through the prom - ise, Christ will come a - gain.
 2 Probe the pres - ent with the prom - ise, Christ will come a - gain.
 3 Match the pres - ent to the prom - ise, Christ will come a - gain.

Unison Em C Am7 D Harmony Em Cmaj7 Dsus D

Trust de - spite the deep - ening dark - ness, Christ will come a - gain.
 Let your dai - ly ac - tions wit - ness, Christ will come a - gain.
 Make this hope your guid - ing prem - ise, Christ will come a - gain.

Unison Am G Am Em Am7 Bm C

Lift the world a - bove its griev - ing through your watch - ing and be - liev - ing
 Let your lov - ing and your giv - ing and your jus - tice and for - giv - ing
 Pat - tern all your cal - cu - lat - ing and the world you are cre - a - ting

G Cmaj7 Am Harmony C Am7 D7 G

in the hope past hope's con - ceiv - ing: Christ will come a - gain.
 be a sign to all the liv - ing: Christ will come a - gain.
 to the ad - vent you are wait - ing: Christ will come a - gain.

This Little Light of Mine

1 This lit-tle light of ___ mine, I'm gon-na let it shine;
 oh, oh,

this lit - tle light of ___ mine, I'm gon - na let it shine;
 oh,

this lit - tle light of ___ mine, I'm gon - na let it shine,
 oh,


let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

2 Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine . . .
 3 Jesus gave it to me; I'm gonna let it shine . . .

Words: African American spiritual, P.D.





Music (LIGHT OF MINE 12.12.12.9): African American spiritual; arr. Nolan Williams Jr (b. 1969) © 2000 GIA Publications, Inc.


As seen on social media....


The First Church in Albany15m · 🌐... ✕

Today marked another successful Soup & Sandwiches Thursday in Clee Park. Our team fed 35 of our neighbors, and enjoyed some fellowship. We just ❤️ this ministry, but it's important to note that long before the servers brave the cold to share all the yummy goodness, a team behind the scenes preps everything for the day. Thanks to Jean & Norma Jean for always making pb&j sandwiches. Ruth, and Mary, and Becky rock as they take turns as chef and sous chefs. And we can't forget the rock-steady Debbie who is here every week to help Becky serve and Bri who comes when she can on her lunch hour from work! The dedication of these folks sets a phenomenal example of how to love one another as Jesus would have us love one another.

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