

Sunday, March 17, 2024 — The Fifth Sunday of Lent

The First Church in Albany

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.

(Reformed Church in America)

Founded in 1642; Continuing in Ministry Today.

Prelude Reflection Alice Walker

"No person is your friend who demands your silence, or denies your right to grow."

Prelude

*"Lenten Prelude"
Flute & Organ Duet*

C. Callahan

Tolling of Bell

Processional Hymn

"We Are People on a Journey"

(see insert)

For each Sunday leading up to Palm Sunday during this season of Lent, five congregants will process with common Christian symbols of worship, signifying our Lenten journey to the cross. These common Christian symbols of worship are a cross (or cloth to drape the cross with), a candle lighter, the church's bible, and the sacramental elements of water, wheat, and vines.

Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing

May the Lord bring you with great joy into his glorious presence.

Call to Worship *Psalm 51:6-12*

Votum: Blessed the Lord Oh my soul. Together let us bless God's holy name.
Amen.

People: Lord, You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.

Leader: Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

People: Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Leader: Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

All: Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

***Opening Hymn** *"For All The Faithful Women"* (see insert)

Prayer of Confession

Lord, please forgive us for the times you have called us to risk our comfort and we say no. Forgive us for the times we assess the problems and decide to stay silent against injustice for the hope of peace in our own lives. Forgive us for ignoring the truth. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. Bless us to leap in faith and not languish in fear.

Time of silence

Choir Anthem

Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law inspired by Jeremiah 22:3 & John 10:10

This is what the LORD says: Administer justice and righteousness. Rescue the victim of robbery from the hand of his oppressor. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless, or the widow. Do not shed innocent blood in this place. Jesus came so that you may have life and have it more abundantly. Have faith. Take heart and leap. Have faith, take heart, and forgive; practice kindness; give generously; and trust God.

***Passing the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us spend a few moments greeting one another.

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!

First Lesson

John 12:20-33 (*NRSVue*)

Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon Text

Esther 4:4-16 (*The Message Translation*)

Esther’s maids and eunuchs came and told her. The queen was stunned. She sent fresh clothes to Mordecai so he could take off his sackcloth but he wouldn’t accept them. Esther called for Hathach, one of the royal eunuchs whom the king had assigned to wait on her, and told him to go to Mordecai and get the full story of what was happening. So Hathach went to Mordecai in the town square in front of the King’s Gate. Mordecai told him everything that had happened to him. He also told him the exact amount of money that Haman had promised to deposit in the royal bank to finance the massacre of the Jews. Mordecai also gave him a copy of the bulletin that had been posted

in Susa ordering the massacre so he could show it to Esther when he reported back with instructions to go to the king and intercede and plead with him for her people.

Hathach came back and told Esther everything Mordecai had said. Esther talked it over with Hathach and then sent him back to Mordecai with this message: “Everyone who works for the king here, and even the people out in the provinces, knows that there is a single fate for every man or woman who approaches the king without being invited: death. The one exception is if the king extends his gold scepter; then he or she may live. And it’s been thirty days now since I’ve been invited to come to the king.”

When Hathach told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai sent her this message: “Don’t think that just because you live in the king’s house you’re the one Jew who will get out of this alive. If you persist in staying silent at a time like this, help and deliverance will arrive for the Jews from someplace else; but you and your family will be wiped out. Who knows? Maybe you were made queen for just such a time as this.”

Esther sent back her answer to Mordecai: “Go and get all the Jews living in Susa together. Fast for me. Don’t eat or drink for three days, either day or night. I and my maids will fast with you. If you will do this, I’ll go to the king, even though it’s forbidden. If I die, I die.

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon

Esther

A Prayer of Blessing on the Word

***Hymn of Response** *“Come, Let Us Honor Esther ”* (see insert)

Profession of Faith Hebrews 10:22-25 (The Message Translation)

So let’s do it—full of belief, confident that we’re presentable inside and out. Let’s keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let’s see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.

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

“Women in the Night ”
Flute & Piano

(see insert)

***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 *A Lenten Prayer sung by choir*

Text by B. Echols | Music by R. Powell

Lord, I ask a blessing for my soul today; Give me peace from heaven as I kneel and pray. Forty days did Jesus face temptations strong; Give me strength to conquer knowing right from wrong.

Lord, I ask a blessing for my soul today; Give me peace from heaven as I kneel and pray. I would be like Jesus turning from all sin, with His love to keep me true and faithful within.

Lord, I ask a blessing for my soul today; Give me peace from heaven as I kneel and pray. When I look to Jesus, He will show the way; Help me come to meet Him Pure on Easter Day.

**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.**

The Lord's Prayer

***Sending Hymn**

"Nothing Can Trouble "

(see insert)

***Charge & Blessing**

Postlude

"Glory to be Jesus"

arr. G.W. Cassler



*Today's Chancel Flowers are from Joeanna Hurston-Brown; "In memory of our father, son, brother and uncle Anthony whom we all miss."
Thank you Joeanna.*

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston

Organist: Iteke Prins

Audio/Visual: Joshua Bliss and Stephen Reohr

Liturgist: TBD

Vocalist and/or Specialist: Jackie Wright, flute, & Choir

Notes:

1. As the Senior Minister, I wish to thank all of you for journeying during this season of Lent via stories of women from the Old Testament. I pray your soul has been lifted and you will live your life with and for Christ!

Sincerely, Mashona Walston

2. All congregants and guests, please make your way down to Zimmerman Hall for a special event "Get to Know First!" where different leaders of First Church will share with those who are becoming members—and the rest of the church—what happens at First Church!

Next Sunday is Palm Sunday. Anyone interested in processing with palm branches alongside the youth of First during the first song is welcome to join, just gather at the back of the sanctuary before service!

PRAYERS, CONCERNS & JOYS

- Jill Persons and Jill's mother in England who is transitioning to nursing care.
- Rose Hunsberger and family as they mourn the death of her father
- Ned Monthie, recovering from surgery
- Michelle Williams, for recovery
- Matt, cousin of Barb Andrews with health issues
- Rev. Dr. Mashona as she continues her health journey
- Mia Westman
- Becky Gardner
- 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
- Carol LaBatte
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, with continued health concerns
- Charnelle Jones
- 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 plan Lent and Holy Week Events.
- For those dealing with climate disasters like blizzards and wildfires.
- 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 or call the office at 518-463-4449

= HAPPY = *Retirement*

**Kim Reohr has retired from her position as
Account Manager, and as a token of
appreciation for 12+ years of dedication and
diligent management of the church's
financial operation, the church would like to
take up a collection up for Kim,
all contributions will be
taken up to March 24th
-The Joint Boards**

Welcome to our new part-time accountant, David Hallenbeck.



FOCUS
CHURCHES OF ALBANY

Easter
Sunrise
Service



**March 31 at 6:30 am
Swan Street Stairs of West Capitol Park**

Come Join the



CHOIR

**Dear Church Family,
The Psalmist mandates us to sing a new
song!!!**

**The Choir will meet each Thursday in
Lent, from 6:30pm - 7:30pm. We need
your voices to join us as we “Praise the
Lord”!**

JR. CHOIR

**We are going to try for a Junior Choir to
help us sing on Easter. Any youngster, 9
and up, is welcome.**

**We will meet for a 1/2 hour right after
the worship service in the choir room.**



The First Church in Albany is committed to the city and people of Albany NY.

This feeding ministry is part of our commitment.

Pantry Hours

**Monday and
Wednesday**

9am - 11:30am

The pantry entrance is on Orange St.

518-463-4449

www.firstchurchinalbany.org

The First Church in Albany
110 North Pearl St.
Albany NY 12207

Holy Week Services

**FCIA
2024**

PALM SUNDAY 3.24.24

- 10am, We process with Palms like those in Jerusalem to begin Holy Week.

MAUNDAY THURSDAY, TENEBRAE: A SERVICE OF SHADOWS 3.28.24

- 7pm, A time of meditation and song around Christ's suffering.

GOOD FRIDAY, CAPITAL AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 3.29.24

- 12pm @ St. Stephens Episcopal Church, 16 Elsmere Ave., Delmar NY

HOLY SATURDAY 3.30.24

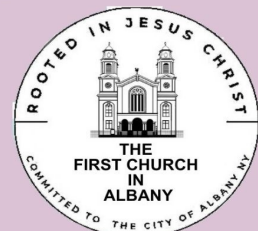
- 12pm, We remember the dead as we remember Christ's death.

FOCUS EASTER SUNRISE SERVICE 3.31.24

- 6:30am, West Capitol Park on the Swan Street Stairs

EASTER SUNDAY 3.31.24

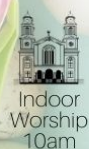
- 10am, We celebrate Christ's resurrection and the new life it gives us.



MARCH 2024

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
 WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH <i>March</i>				 T FOCUS Easter Sunrise Service March 31 6:30am West Capital Park	1	2 2024 Poor People's State of the State Assembly at the NYS Capitol
3  Communion Sunday  Coffee Hour	4 	5  Consistory Mtg.	6  AA	7  Soup & PB&J 11:30am  Choir Rehearsal  Potluck & First Thursday Night of Worship	8	9
10  Coffee Hour  Indoor Worship 10am  DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME BEGINS	11 	12 	13  AA	14  Soup & PB&J 11:30am  Choir Rehearsal	15	16 InterVarsity High School Event
17  Coffee Hour  Indoor Worship 10am 	18 	19 	20  AA  Weather vanes	21  Soup & PB&J 11:30am  Choir Rehearsal	22	23
24  Indoor Worship 10am  Happy Easter	25 	26  FOCUS Board Mtg.	27  AA	28  M Maundy Thursday 7pm	29  Good Friday	30  Holy Saturday noon

Key:



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

Easter Flowers

Order while quantities last. First come, first serve.

Lilies and Mums are
a suggested donation of \$15 each.
Please use the envelope available from the usher at the door
with check enclosed and place it in the offering,
or mail it to
First Church in Albany
110 N. Pearl St., Albany NY 12207

Make checks payable to First Church in Albany with "Easter
Flowers" on the memo line.

You may also call the office during the week at
518-463-4449



First Church in Albany

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

www.firstchurchinalbany.org

We Are People on a Journey

A E A E E/D#

1 We are peo - ple on a jour - ney, fol - lowing
 2 We are peo - ple on a jour - ney, tak - ing
 3 We are peo - ple on a jour - ney to the
 4 We are peo - ple on a jour - ney, ris - ing

C#m7 A2 E A

where the Mas - ter walks. We are peo - ple on a
 up the cross of Christ. We are peo - ple on a
 ta - ble of the Lord. We are peo - ple on a
 up in life re - born. We are peo - ple on a

E F#m7 E A E

jour - ney in the sha - dow 7 of the cross.
 jour - ney, mov - ing on — from death to life.
 jour - ney, fed by wa - ter 7 and the Word.
 jour - ney, speak - ing peace, — ac - cept - ing scorn.

A2 E

What com - pels? The face of Je - sus!
 We re - lease the sin that tan - gles.
 We re - mem - ber, we re - mem - ber
 We are walk - ing toward a home - land,

A2 D A

Who pro - tects? Our faith - ful guide:
 We re - lin - quish all ac - claim.
 how you wash dis - ci - ples' feet;
 to a mys - tery yet un - known;

E A E

he who treads the road of ser - vice,
 We re - ceive the suf - fering Sav - ior,
 we re - mem - ber on the last night
 to a king - dom com - ing quick - ly,

C#m7 A E

Christ the Lord, the cru - ci - fied.
 he our glo - ry, wealth, and fame.
 gifts of wine and bread to eat.
 to the light of God's own throne.

C#m7 Bm7 E A2 To stanzas E Final ending

For All the Faithful Women

Capo 3: (C) (Am7) (F) (G) (C)
 E^b Cm7 A^b B^b E^b

1 For all the faith - ful wom - en who served in
 2 We praise your name for Mir - iam, who sang tri -
 3 We sing of bus - y Mar - tha, who toiled with
 4 Lord, hear our praise of Dor - cas, who served the

(G) (C) (Am7) (Dm) (G)
 B^b E^b Cm7 Fm B^b

days of old, to you shall thanks be giv - en; to
 um - phant - ly while Pha - raoh's vaunt - ed ar - my lay
 pot and pan while Mar - y sat in si - lence to
 sick and poor. Her hands were cups of kind - ness, her

(C) (G7) (C) (Am)
 E^b B^b7 E^b Cm

all, their sto - ry told. They served with strength and
 drowned be - neath the sea; for Ruth, who left her
 hear the word a - gain. We praise the oth - er
 heart an o - pen door. O God, for saints and

(D) (G) (F) (G) (C)
 F B^b A^b B^b E^b

glad - ness in tasks your wis - dom gave. To you their
 home - land and ven - tured forth in faith, who pledged to
 Mar - y, who has - tened to the tomb and found her
 ser - vants, our fer - vent prayer we raise, that, faith - ful

(Am7) (F) (G) (C) (Dm) (G) (C)
 Cm7 A^b B^b E^b Fm B^b E^b

lives bore wit - ness, pro - claimed your power to save.
 serve and wor - ship Na - o - mi's God till death.
 Lord a - ris - en, dis - pel - ling doubt and gloom.
 in your ser - vice, our lives may sing your praise.

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

Created to honor the tenth anniversary of the first ordination of a woman in the Lutheran Church in America, this text celebrates representative women of the Bible: Miriam and Ruth from Hebrew Scripture, Mary, Martha, and Mary Magdalene from the gospels, and Dorcas from Acts.

Come, Let Us Honor Esther

76 76D

Iteke Prins 2023

Edith Sinclair Downing

ESTHER

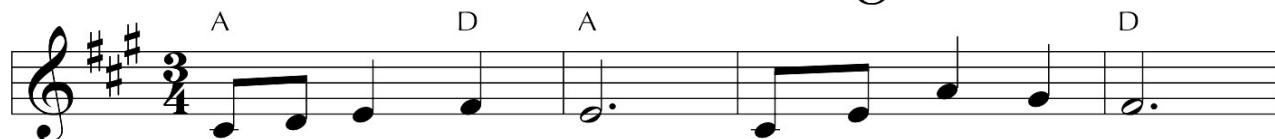
1. Come, let us ho-nor Es-ther, her cour-age we ap-
2. She mo-deled how her peo-ple, dis-persed and lack-ing
3. God, grant that we, like Es-ther, have cour-age for our

plaud. When she could live with rich-es she dared to serve her God. She
pow'r, could work with-in the sys-tem in this their cru-cial hour. By
quest, and use our past ex-pe-rience to serve those not as blessed Help

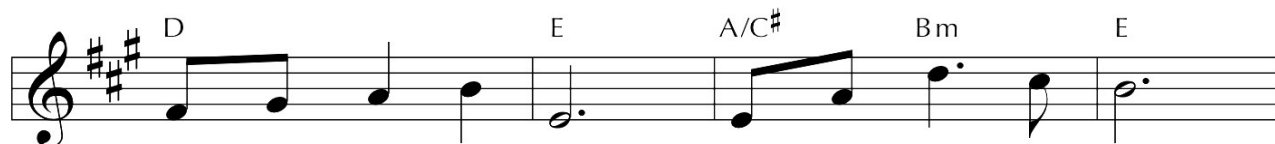
could not rest with pri-vi-lege de-ny her peo-ple's fate, She
in-di-rect per-sua-tion she car-ried our her scheme and
us to trust you ful-ly that we may find our bliss, and

chose to live her cal-ling: serve those out side her gate.
used her cle-ver cun-ning to gain the king's es-teem.
ans- wer when you call us for 'such a time as this.'

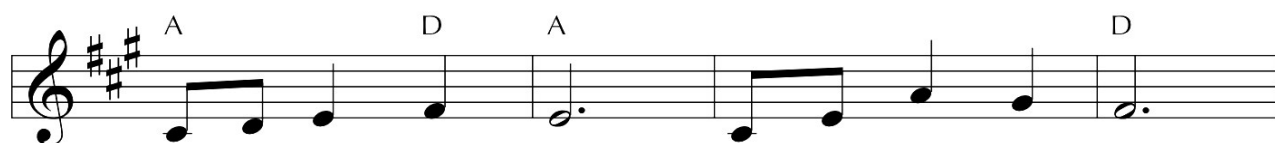
Woman in the Night



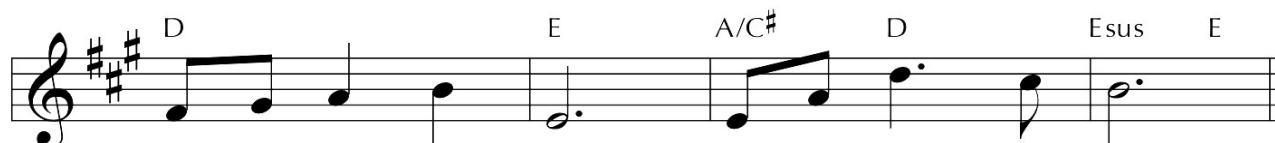
1 Wom-an in the night, spent from giv - ing birth,
 2 Wom-an at the well, ques - tion the Mes - siah;
 3 Wom-an in the house, nur - tured to be meek,
 4 Wom-en on the hill, stand when men have fled;



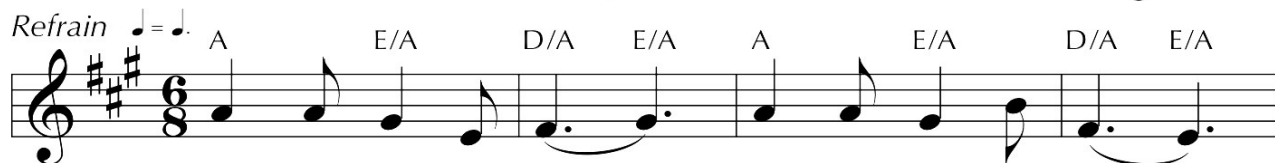
guard our pre - cious light; peace is on the earth.
 find your friends and tell: drink your heart's de - sire!
 leave your sec - ond place, lis - ten, think, and speak!
 Christ needs lov - ing still, though your hope is dead.



Wom-an in the crowd, creep - ing up be - hind,
 Wom-an at the feast, let the righ - teous stare;
 Wom-en on the road, from your sick - ness freed,
 Wom-en in the dawn, care and spic - es bring,



touch - ing is al - lowed: seek and you will find!
 come and go in peace; love him with your hair!
 wit - ness and pro - vide, join - ing word and deed:
 ear - li - est to mourn, ear - li - est to sing!



Come and join the song, wom - en, chil - dren, men.



Je - sus makes us free to live a - gain!

Nothing Can Trouble

Sing 3X

Nada te turbe

1

Noth-ing can trou - ble; noth-ing can fright - en. Those who seek
Na - da te tur - be, na - da te es - pan - te. Quien a Dios

2

God shall nev - er go want - ing. God a - lone fills us.
tie - ne na - da le fal - ta. So - lo Dios bas - ta.

This meditative refrain from Taizé is based on a saying attributed to Teresa of Avila: "Let nothing trouble you; let nothing frighten you. All things are passing; God never changes. Patience obtains all things. Whoever possesses God lacks nothing: God alone suffices."

TEXT: Attr. Teresa of Avila, 16th cent.; para. Taizé Community: Spanish, 1986; English, 1995

MUSIC: Jacques Berthier, 1986

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NADA TE TURBE

Irregular