



**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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**Sunday, September 24, 2023 10am**  
**Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost**

**Prelude Reflection** *Haiku for today's worship*

It is who God is  
Not an eye for an eye, but  
Generous to all

**Prelude** *II. Adagio, from Piano Sonata No.12 in F major, K.332*

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

**Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing**

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all." **Amen.** 2 Corinthians 13:14

## Call to Worship *Based on Psalm 145*

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

Leader: Praise the Lord, the sovereign of the universe!

**People: We'll praise your name, your greatness, and sing joyously to you!**

Leader: For everyday you do wondrous things.

**People: Works of mercy and kindness – acts of goodness beyond compare!**

Leader: Great are you Lord, and greatly to be praised

**People: because your love and grace are boundless!**

Leader: Let us, now, sing how great the Lord is!

## \*Opening Hymn

(see insert)

*“How Great Thou Art”*

## Prayer of Confession *Based on the Book of Jonah*

**Gracious God, we confess our tendency to grumble, akin to Jonah's grumbling when you forgave the people of Nineveh. At times, we grumble when we don't like what you're doing in others' lives, or even when we simply don't get our way. Send your Holy Spirit to remind us that our grumbling may blind us to the glorious work you're doing. Help us trust your goodness and embrace your mercy for all. Amen.**

*Time of silence*

## Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law *Based on Philippians 1*

Friends, hear the good news: In Christ, we are a new creation – our grumbling can be turned to praise. For the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians, “For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain.” Therefore, “live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,” for in so doing you will live a liberated life where grumbling is of no use.

## \*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

### Affirmation & Blessing of the Prayer Shawls

Leader 1: God of love and comfort, we know that you are always present in our lives and that your love transcends all tragedy, illness, and pain. We know that you are in all things, with us in our joys and our sorrows. We ask you, O God, to bless these shawls, those who will be wrapped in them, and the hands that make them.

Leader 2: In the words of Psalm 90:17 "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and confirm for us the work of our hands."

**People: God, we ask for your blessing upon these shawls. May they be a touchstone to a safe haven, a sacred place of security, a place of well-being, a place where your Presence is known.**

Leader 2: These shawls were made to bring assurance to those who feel afraid, sad, alone, or uncertain.

Leader 1: May all who receive these know the intricate love and care interwoven in these shawls, a love that mirrors the care that God gives to all people.

Leader 2: These shawls were made to remind the recipient that they are part of this community.

**People: May those who receive these shawls feel touched by our love, moved by our guidance, and held up by our support.**

Leader 2: These shawls were made to bring peace to those in need of prayer.

Leader 1: May they feel the warm embrace of the Holy Spirit as they wrap themselves within these shawls.

**People: O Holy Spirit may all who wear and hold these shawls be cradled in hope, kept in joy, graced with peace, and wrapped in love. Thank you for your blessing. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.**



## **Prayer for Illumination**

**Holy Spirit, come. Open our hearts and minds as we explore this parable of the laborers in the vineyard. May we grasp the depth of grace and breadth of generosity in the Gospel of Jesus. It's in his name we pray. Amen.**

## **Scripture Reading**

Jonah 3:10-4:11

Leader: The Word of the Lord.

**People: Thanks be to God.**

## **Sermon Text**

Matthew 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard.

When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and he said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.’ So they went. When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around, and he said to them, ‘Why are you standing here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘Because no one has hired us.’ He said to them, ‘You also go into the vineyard.’

When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, ‘Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.’ When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received a denarius.

Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?’ So the last will be first, and the first will be last.”

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

**People: Praise to you, O Christ!**

## **Sermon**

*The Gospel Isn't Fair. It's Better Than Fair.*

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

## **\*Hymn of Response**

*(see insert)*

*“There's a Wideness in God's Mercy “*



**Profession of Faith** A portion of the “We Believe” segment of Section 4 of the *Confession of Belhar, one of the four confessions of the Reformed Church in America.*

**“We believe:**

- that God has revealed himself as the one who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among people;
- **that God, in a world full of injustice and enmity, is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged;**
- that God calls the church to follow him in this, for God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry;
- **that God frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind;**
- that God supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly;
- **that, for God, pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering”**

**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**                    *“March of the Priests” from the Magic Flute*    arr. R. Metzdorff

**\*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.

**Prayers of the People**

Leader: O Lord,  
People: Hear our prayer.

**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.
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**\*Sending Hymn**

*“Come, Labor On”*

*(see insert)*

**\*Charge & Blessing**

**Postlude**                    *“Take this Treasure” from the Magic Flute*    arr. R. Metzdorff

**Preacher:** Rev. Trey Tirpak  
**Piano:** Eugene Sit  
**Audio/Visual:** Joshua Bliss, Stephen Reohr

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## Prayers, Joys & Concerns

- Norma McClement
- For Carol Lewis and family, as they mourn the passing of Carol's husband David. Carol is Ray Van Epps' sister.
- For Shirley Mockel, good friend of Marilyn Bradley, with health concerns.
- Kathleen Claydon
- Doug Plummer, friend of the Bradley family, as he begins treatment for health concerns
- For Barbara, friend of Barb Andrews and Donna Jones
- Becky Gardner
- Virginia Giguere and family as they mourn the passing of her brother Jason Miller in June.
- Sam, son of Barb and Dave Andrews, recovering from surgery
- Carol LaBatte
- Sharnelle Jones
- Joeanna Brown
- Norma Jean Ballou
- For Sara Bonam-Welge and family
- Deborah Paris, daughter of Betty Pierce
- Sam, cousin of Barb Andrews
- For Barb and Dave Andrews as they take on the role of caretakers
- Ken Lucas, friend of Philip Labatte
- Kokese Ballou
- For Jennifer Recene Gallagher
- Ruth and Josue Torres
- For Jim, Rose Hunsberger's father
- 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
- Donna Schultz
- Olivia Gaydushek
- Clergy, staff and leaders of the First Church in Albany
- For the victims of Hurricane Idalia that struck Florida this week
- For our Maui Family (Ohana) as they recover from the recent wildfires.
- Prayers for 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 or call the office.  
office@firstchurchinalbany.org  
518-463-4449





# 2023 SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3 <b>FOCUS</b> CHURCHES OF ALBANY Emmanuel Baptist	4  <b>LABOR DAY!</b> Office Closed	5	6  AA	7  A Night of Worship	8	9
10  +	11 	12	13  AA	14	15	16 Joint Board Retreat
17  + Final Drive-In of the Season	18 	19	20  AA	21	22	23
24  +	25 	26	27  AA	28	29	30

**Key:**

-  Drive In Worship 10am
-  Indoor Worship 10am
-  Coffee Hour
-  Communion Sunday
-  Lemonade Lull
-  Pantry 9am
-  Centering Prayer 12pm







## Join Us for This Week's Events

SUN 24

- 10am: First Indoor Worship of Season (also on Zoom and YouTube), See our website for links to worship info.

MON 25

- 9am: Food Pantry in temporary location

TUE 26

- Noon: Adult Book Study



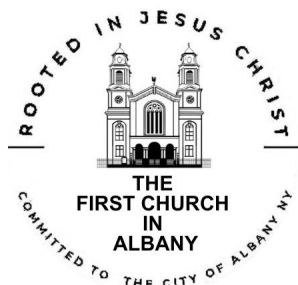
Scan for  
full event  
calendar

WED

27

- 9am: Food Pantry in temporary location
- Noon: Centering Prayer (Powell), AA Mtg (Parlor)

Worship now streaming live on YouTube.



## First Church in Albany

110 North Pearl St.

Albany NY 12207

518-463-4449

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



# How Great Thou Art



1. O Lord my God, when I in awe-some  
 2. When through the woods and for-est glades I  
 3. And when I think that God, his Son not  
 4. When Christ shall come with shout of ac-cla-



won-der Con-sid-er all the works thy hands have  
 wan-der And hear the birds sing sweet-ly in the  
 spar-ing, Sent him to die, I scarce can take it  
 ma-tion And take me home, what joy shall fill my



made, I see the stars, I hear the roll-ing  
 trees, When I look down from loft-y moun-tain  
 in That on the cross, my bur-den glad-ly  
 heart! Then I shall bow in hum-ble ad-o



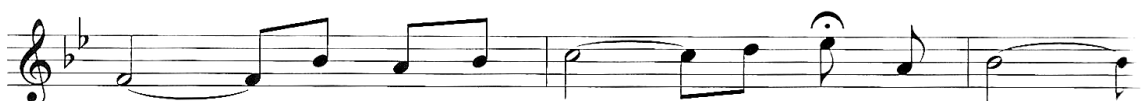
thun-der, Thy pow'r through-out the u-ni-verse dis-played  
 gran-deur And hear the brook and feel the gen-tle breeze  
 bear-ing, He bled and died to take a-way my sin!  
 ra-tion And there pro-claim, "My God, how great thou art!"



Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to thee: How great thou



art, how great thou art! Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God



thee: How great thou art, how great thou art!

Text: Stuart K. Hine, 1899–1989

Tune: HOW GREAT THOU ART, 11 10 11 10 with refrain; Swedish folk melody; adapt. and arr. by Stuart K. Hine, 1899–1989

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# There's a Wideness in God's Mercy

1 There's a wide - ness in God's mer - cy, like the wide - ness  
 2 For the love of God is broad - er than the mea - sures

of the sea. There's a kind - ness in God's jus - tice,  
 of the mind. And the heart of the E - ter - nal

which is more than lib - er - ty. There is no place where earth's  
 is most won - der - ful - ly kind. If our love were but more

sor - rows are more felt than up in heaven. There is no place  
 faith - ful, we would glad - ly trust God's Word, and our lives re -

where earth's fail - ings have such kind - ly judg - ment given.  
 flect thanks - giv - ing for the good - ness of our Lord.

These stanzas, excerpted from quite a few more, offer a reminder that the model for our dealings with others should be God's generosity rather than limited human tolerance. The text is effectively set to a broad and sturdy Dutch folk melody, probably from the 17th century.

# Come, Labor On

Jane Laurie Borthwick, 1859, 1863  
Stanza 4, line 5, alt.

ORA LABORA: 4. 10. 10. 10. 4.  
T. Tertius Noble, 1918

*In unison*

1. Come, la - bor on. Who dares stand i - dle on the har-vest plain  
2. Come, la - bor on. Claim the high call - ing an - gels can-not share—  
3. Come, la - bor on. A - way with gloom-y doubts and faith-less fear!  
4. Come, la - bor on. No time for rest, till glows the west-ern sky,

While all a - round him waves the gold - en grain? And to each serv - ant  
To young and old the gos - pel glad-ness bear; Re - deem the time; its  
No arm so weak but may do serv - ice here: By fee-blest a - gents  
Till the long shad - ows o'er our path-way lie, And a glad sound comes

does the Mas - ter say, "Go work to - day."  
hours too swift - ly fly. The night draws nigh.  
may our God ful - fill His right - eous will.  
with the set - ting sun, "Well done, well done!" A-MEN.