

The First Church in Albany

Conversations at the barren

fig tree

Sunday, March 30, 2025, 10am

**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.*

*We welcome today, Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary as our
guest preacher. Rev. Dr. McCreary is the President of New
Brunswick Theological Seminary.*

Prelude *"Carillon on Psalm 42"* A. Fedak

Tolling of the Bells

Welcome, Announcements, & Blessing

II Corinthians 13:14

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Amen.

Lenten Introit "Forty Days and Forty Nights"

G. Smyttan/C. Kimberling

Call to Worship *"Joy in the House"* Phil Wickham
Glenn Claydon, guitar

***Opening Hymn** "O For A Thousand Tongues" See p. 6

Prayer of Confession

**Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned
against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we
have done, and by what we have left undone. We
have not loved you with our whole heart; we have
not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly
sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your
Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your
ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

Time of silence

Assurance of Pardon & Fulfillment of the Law

Hear the good news: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven! God's mercy is deeper than our sin, and God's love lifts us beyond our failures.

So receive God's grace: May we live as those who are truly forgiven, delighting in God's will, walking in God's ways, and sharing God's love. May it be so. Amen.

***Passing the Peace**

Leader: The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

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

(Don't forget to wave to those worshiping from home!)

Prayer for Illumination

Scripture Reading Luke 13:6-9

Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the man working the vineyard, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.' "

Leader: The Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

"Conversations at the Barren Fig Tree"

A Prayer of Blessing on the Word

***Hymn of Response** *"The Church's One Foundation"*

See p. 7

Profession of Faith *The Apostles' Creed*

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church*,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

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 Anthem “*The Earth Is White With Blossoms*” G. Grindal
Choir & Jackie Wright, flute

**The earth is white with blossoms, sweet snow on emerald ground,
the fragrant air of summer will soon be wafting round.
Our hopes will turn to harvest when we will come to find
Red apples full and ripened, sweet fruit of every kind.**

**Though all are bright with blossoms, one tree has not borne fruit;
the farmer loses patience and wants to cut it’s roots.
His servant cried in protest, “O do not cut it down;
I’ll fertilize and prune it and cultivate the ground.”**

**“Just one year more,” the farmer agreed to let it be.
“Next year if it is barren, I’ll burn that fruitless tree.
I do not care how lovely for us net spring;
if it is not productive, uproot the foolish thing.**

**O Jesus, come and help me when I do not bear fruit;
make soft the earth around me, and clear away dead roots.
Without your love I cannot do all the good I would.
Fill me so I can flourish and bear the fruit I should.**

***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.***

Offertory Prayer

Good God, may these gifts be used to spread your love to others, bringing hope and healing to a world in need. Thank you for your love that never fails us. **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** *“All Who Love and Serve Your City”* See p. 8

***Charge & Blessing**

Postlude *“Come to Calvary’s ”* arr. M. Burkhardt

Notes & Announcements:

- Please join us for a reception downstairs in Zimmerman Hall!

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary

Liturgists: Audrey Ming,
Rev. Dr. Mashona Walston

Organist: Iteke Prins

Vocalist and/or Specialist: First Church Choir, Jackie Wright, flute, Glenn Claydon, guitar

Audio/Visual: Joshua Bliss and Stephen Reohr

CCLI License #463379;
One License #A-700689



The First Church in Albany invites you to join us for

Holy Week

| | | |
|----------|---|---------|
| April 13 | Palm Sunday Worship Service | 10 AM |
| April 17 | Maundy Thursday Tenebrae Service | 7 PM |
| April 19 | Holy Saturday Easter Vigil | 7 PM |
| April 20 | Easter Sunday Worship Service, followed by an Easter Egg Maze 12yr and under | 10 AM |
| April 18 | Good Friday at St. Andrew's Episcopal, Albany | 12 PM |
| April 20 | FOCUS Churches Easter Sunrise Service | 6:30 AM |

See www.firstchurchinalbany.org for more information.

Prayer LIST as of 3.26.25

(To add an item to the prayer chain, contact a minister, the office or a member of consistory.

♥ *Indicates a new listing*

Current Concerns

- ♥ Becky Hudak, as she and her friend Faye continue on the Camino de Santiago in Spain.
- ♥ Starlene Haviland, recovering from recent eye surgery
 - Peggy McMahon, resting comfortably after a procedure that went well

Ongoing Needs

- Olivia Gaydushek
- Wilma Sheffer
- Mia Westman
- Ministers, staff, and leaders of First Church as they move forward into our everchanging World
- For areas recovering from natural disasters like fires, earthquakes, etc.
- For war-torn places and area of conflict throughout the world
- The staff, volunteers, and guest of the CACC Overflow Shelter
- For those in our immediate area dealing with gun violence and its aftermath

Give Thanks

- Congratulations to the Vander Werker family on the birth of daughter Maizie.

Note: Prayer concerns will be kept on the list for 4 Sundays. Please let the office or a member of Consistory know if a concern needs to be kept on after that.



Weather vanes
The First Church in Albany

Food Again for April Gathering!

Join the Weather vanes on Wednesday, April 9th at 12:30 pm in Zimmerman Hall. We are having the meeting a week earlier than usual because the third Wednesday in April falls during Holy Week. We will be trying foods which we might be having for our luncheon on May 21st. The portions will be sample size so if you think you will want more to eat, you may want to bring a sandwich. Dessert and beverages will be served.

Please contact Audrey Ming (518-456-5485) to let her know you are coming.

O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing 610

1 O for a thou - sand tongues to sing my
 2 The name of Je - sus charms our fears, and
 3 Christ speaks, and lis - tening to his voice new
 4 My gra - cious Mas - ter and my God, as -
 5 To God all glo - ry, praise, and love be

dear Re - deem - er's praise, the glo - ries of my
 bids our sor - rows cease, sings mu - sic in the
 life the dead re - ceive; the mourn - ful wak - en
 sist me to pro - claim, to spread through all the
 now and ev - er given by saints be - low and

God and King, the tri - umphs of God's grace!
 sin - ner's ears, brings life, and health, and peace.
 to re - jice; the poor in heart be - lieve.
 earth a - broad the hon - ors of thy name.
 saints a - bove, the church in earth and heaven.

SPANISH

1 *Mil voces para celebrar
 a mi Libertador,
 las glorias de su majestad,
 los triunfos de su amor.*

KOREAN

1 만 입이 내게 있으면
 그 입 다 가지고
 내 구주 주신 은총을
 늘 찬송하겠네

This text comes from an eighteen-stanza hymn the author wrote to mark the first anniversary of his life-changing conversion experience. It is now customarily the first hymn in Methodist hymnals worldwide. This tune, adapted from a German composer, is the usual North American setting.

The Church's One Foundation 321

1 The chur-ch's one foun-da-tion is Je-sus Christ her Lord.
 2 E-lect from ev-ery na-tion, yet one o'er all the earth,
 3 Though with a scorn-ful won-der this world sees her op-pressed,
 4 Mid toil and trib-u-la-tion, and tu-mult of her war,
 5 Yet she on earth has un-ion with God, the Three in One,

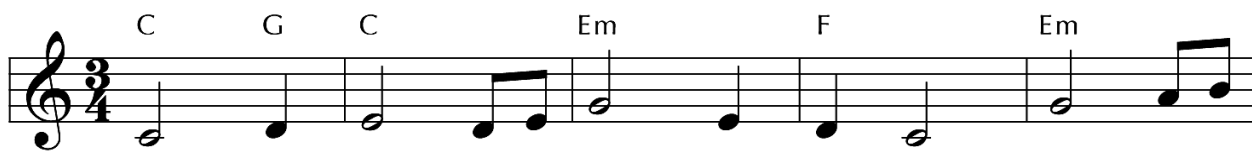
She is his new cre-a-tion by wa-ter and the word.
 her char-ter of sal-va-tion: one Lord, one faith, one birth.
 by schis-ms rent a-sun-der, by her-e-sies dis-tressed,
 she waits the con-sum-ma-tion of peace for-ev-er-more:
 and mys-tic sweet com-mu-nion with those whose rest is won:

From heaven he came and sought her to be his ho-ly bride.
 One ho-ly name she bless-es, par-takes one ho-ly food,
 yet saints their watch are keep-ing; their cry goes up: "How long?"
 till with the vi-sion glo-rious her long-ing eyes are blest,
 O hap-py ones and ho-ly! Lord, give us grace that we,

With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.
 and to one hope she press-es, with ev-ery grace en-dued.
 And soon the night of weep-ing shall be the morn of song.
 and the great church vic-to-rious shall be the church at rest.
 like them, the meek and low-ly, may live e-ter-nal-ly.

This hymn was one of twelve written by an English curate to affirm the articles of the Apostles' Creed with biblical allusions such as 1 Corinthians 3:11 here. Though not created for this text, the tune was joined to it in 1868, and the two have been inseparable ever since.

All Who Love and Serve Your City 351



1 All who love and serve your cit - y, all who
 2 In your day of wealth and plen - ty, wast - ed
 3 For all days are days of judg - ment, and the
 4 Ris - en Lord, shall yet the cit - y be the



bear its dai - ly stress, all who cry for
 work and wast - ed play, call to mind the
 Lord is wait - ing still, draw - ing near a
 cit - y of de - spair? Come to - day, our



peace and jus - tice, all who curse and all who bless:
 word of Je - sus, "You must work while it is day."
 world that spurns him, of - fering peace from Cal - vary's hill.
 judge, our glo - ry. Be its name "The Lord is there!"

Guitar chords do not correspond with keyboard harmony.

This 20th-century text greatly enriches the neglected genre of urban hymns. The second stanza quotes John 9:4, the third stanza refers to Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37/Luke 13:34), and the final line cites the name given to Israel's future holy city (Ezekiel 48:35).

TEXT: Erik Routley, 1966

MUSIC: *The United States Sacred Harmony*, 1799; harm. Carlton R. Young, 1964

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Music Harm. © 1965 Abingdon Press (admin. The Copyright Company)

CHARLESTOWN

8.7.8.7

Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary

President of New Brunswick Theological Seminary

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Rev. Dr. Micah L. McCreary began his term as the 12th president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 2017. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from the University of Michigan; a Master of Divinity from the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology, Virginia Union University; and a Master of Science and Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University. He has received several fellowships, including the American Psychological Association Minority Fellowship, the State Council of Higher Education in Virginia Fellowship, and the American Council on Education Presidential Fellowship.



Prior to coming to NBTS, President McCreary was president and CEO of McCreary and Madison Associates, a psychological and human resources consulting firm headquartered in Richmond, VA. He also served as a tenured Associate Professor of Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) for 21 years. While at VCU, President McCreary held the positions of Assistant Vice Provost for Diversity, Quality Enhancement Plan Coordinator, and Co-Director of the Counseling Psychology Program. He has published numerous articles and book chapters on topics such as Trauma and Race: The Path to Psycho-Social-Spiritual Wellbeing; Church Hurt and Suicidal Ideation: What the Church Should and Shouldn't Say and Do; and The Holy Pause of Holy Saturday

President McCreary is a member of the New Brunswick Classis of the Reformed Church in America (RCA). He was ordained by the New Hope Baptist Church in Ann Arbor, Michigan (member of the National Baptist Convention), and his ordination was recognized by the American Baptist Churches in 2001 and received by the RCA in 2018. In 2021 President McCreary was installed as an RCA General Synod Professor of Theology.

President McCreary and his spouse, Rev. Dr. Jacqueline E. Madison-McCreary, pastored the Spring Creek Baptist Church in Moseley, Virginia for 16 years. Prior to Spring Creek, Dr. McCreary was Director of Youth Ministry for the Baptist General Convention of Virginia and Senior Pastor of the Rising Mount Zion Baptist Church of Sandston, Virginia. The McCrearys are the parents of one adult daughter, Makeda McCreary.

Lectio Divina

Sunday

9:15am - 9:45am

in the Stephen James Chapel
at

The First Church in Albany

110 North Pearl St. Albany NY 12207

In Latin, these words mean “holy” or “spiritual reading” It is a form of intentional reading of bible verses once practiced solely by monks.

At First, we would like to invite you to begin your new year praying with us for all the things that lie before us.

Bible Study

JOIN US ON ZOOM MEETING
www.firstchurchinalbany.org for link

WEDNESDAYS AT 7:30PM



The First Church in Albany

Join us at

Wednesday at noon

in our Sanctuary

All are welcome!

Centering PRAYER

Communion will be shared
at this gathering

110 North Pearl St. Albany NY 12207



Tuesday Afternoon Zoom Bible Study

1:00PM - 2:00PM

The Tuesday noon Bible study group meets each week. All are invited and will be most welcome. We will be following the common lectionary passages for the upcoming Sunday with Pastor Mashona. Links can be found on the website.

We are doing this on a week by week basis so anyone can drop into the Bible study at any time no need for a long-term commitment!





April 2025



Key:

-  Indoor Worship 10am
-  Communion Sunday
-  Coffee Hour
-  Pantry 9am
-  Centering Prayer 12pm
-  AA 12pm
-  First KIDS
-  Choir
-  BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm
-  Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am

| SUN | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT |
|--|-----------|---|--|--|---|--|
|  | | 1 APRIL Fools' DAY! Prayer Shawl Group 11:30am Pantry 9am BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm Consistory Mtg. 6:30pm | 2 Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am Centering Prayer 12pm AA 12pm BIBLE Zoom Study 7:30pm | 3 Pantry 9am Choir 6:30pm | 4 | 5  |
| 6 Communion Sunday Indoor Worship 10am Pantry 9am Coffee Hour | 7 | 8 Pantry 9am BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm | 9 Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am Centering Prayer 12pm AA 12pm Weather-vanes 12:30pm CropWalk Mtg. 4pm BIBLE Zoom Study 7:30pm | 10 Pantry 9am Choir 6:30pm | 11 | 12  Recital 2pm |
| 13 Palm Sunday First KIDS 2nd HOUR Indoor Worship 10am | 14 | 15 Pantry 9am BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm FOCUS BBQ Fundraiser 4pm 1st United Methodist Delmar | 16 Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am Centering Prayer 12pm AA 12pm BIBLE Zoom Study 7:30pm | 17 Maundy Thursday Pantry 9am Tenebrae Service 7pm Choir 6:30pm | 18 Good Friday Ecumenical Service 12pm St. Andrew's Episcopal Church | 19 Holy Saturday Easter Vigil 7pm |
| 20 Easter Sunday FOCUS Easter Sunrise Service 6:30am Indoor Worship 10am Coffee Hour | 21 | 22 EARTH DAY Pantry 9am BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm FOCUS Board Mtg. 6:30pm | 23 Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am Centering Prayer 12pm AA 12pm BIBLE Zoom Study 7:30pm | 24 Pantry 9am Choir 6:30pm | 25 | 26 |
| 27 First KIDS Indoor Worship 10am Coffee Hour 2nd HOUR | 28 | 29 Pantry 9am BIBLE Zoom Study 1pm | 30 Last of season Soup & Sandwiches 11:30am Centering Prayer 12pm AA 12pm BIBLE Zoom Study 7:30pm |  | | |

CACC Overflow Shelter Daily 6pm-8am. Season ends April 30th

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE FIRST CHURCH IN ALBANY

APRIL 2025

**TUE
1**

PANTRY 9AM
PRAYER SHAWL MTG. 11:30AM
ZOOM BIBLE STUDY 1PM
CONSISTORY 6:30PM

**WED
2**

SOUP & SANDWICHES 11:30AM
CENTERING PRAYER IN SANCTUARY NOON
AA MEETING NOON
ZOOM BIBLE STUDY 7:30PM

**THU
3**

PANTRY 9AM
CHOIR REHEARSAL 6:30PM

**SAT
5**

KEYS FOR KIDS 10AM
NEXT SATURDAY, APRIL 12 AT 2PM,
JOIN US FOR THE KEYS FOR KIDS
ANNUAL RECITAL

**SUN
6**

LECTIO DIVINA 9AM
WORSHIP COMMUNION SUNDAY 10AM

**THE CACC OVERFLOW SHELTER IS OPEN EACH EVENING 6PM - 8AM.
THROUGH APRIL 30.**

FOR MORE INFO VISIT US AT WWW.FIRSTCHURCHINALBANY.ORG



First Church in Albany

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

www.firstchurchinalbany.org