

# Second Sunday of Advent

## December 8, 2024



First Congregational Church of Fresno  
United Church of Christ  
2131 N. Van Ness Blvd.  
Fresno, CA 93704

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi  
Pastor

# Our Gathering

(\*Congregation may stand | Responses: Liturgist/**Congregation/all**)

<b>Prelude</b>		Scott Horton, piano
<b>Welcome</b>		Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi
<b>Hymn of Approach</b>	“One Candle Is Lit” vs.2	Insert
<b>Lighting the Candle of Hope</b>		Pauline Phillips and Gayle Thornton
<b>*Hymn</b>	“The Baptist Shouts on Jordan’s Shore”	#115, pew hymnal
<b>Prayer of Transformation</b>		Bailey Hill, Liturgist

**As you move about your Realm on Earth, you desire our prayers to come alive. Knowing the hopes of our hearts, you call us to create action that will help our neighbors. Yet, there are times we continue to pray in mind only, never fulfilling our calling to care for our neighbors. What we forget is that joy abounds when we can transform a prayer from thoughts to concrete actions, blessing our siblings across our world. Amen.**

## Words of Grace

### **\*Passing of the Peace**

Greeting: *The Peace of Christ be with you.*

Response: ***And also with you.***

### **\*Response of Praise (Sung)**

**Gloria Patri**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit Three in One;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen. Amen.**

## Choral Anthem

“Breath of Heaven”  
Eaton & Grant  
arr. Courtney

Chancel Choir  
Ann-English Weaver, soloist

**Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still;  
let this be our song — no one stands alone,  
standing side by side. Draw the circle wide.**

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### The Lord's Prayer

**Our Creator, 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,  
the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.**

*- When invited, all in the sanctuary may come forward with  
your strip of blue cloth to place in the manger-*

**\*Hymn** "There's A Voice in the Wilderness" #120, pew hymnal

**Scripture** Luke 3:1-6 Bailey Hill

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias ruler of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord;  
make his paths straight.

Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth,

**Sung Call to Prayer**

**Lord, listen to your children praying:**

**Lord send your Spirit in this place.**

**Lord, listen to your children praying:**

**Send us love, send us power, send us grace.**

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**The Church at Prayer**

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

**Invitation to Generosity**

Bailey Hill



*Here at the Big Red Church, everyone counts, and every gift counts!*

- ⇒ *There are two donation boxes and giving envelopes for your gifts in the Narthex (the area where an usher handed you an Order of Worship).*
- ⇒ *You can also give through the Givelify App by scanning the QR code.*
- ⇒ *BigRedChurch.org/giving/ has more instructions, links, and information about giving to the church. Thank you for supporting and joining in the ministry of this church.*

**Offertory**

**“E’en So, Lord Jesus, Quickly Come”**  
- P. Manz

Chancel Choir

**\*Doxology and Dedication**

***We give You but Your own,  
whate’er the gift may be;  
All that we have is Yours alone,  
we give it gratefully. Amen.***

**\*Closing Hymn**

**“Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates”**

#117, pew hymnal

**\*Benediction**

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

**\*Blessing Song**

“Go Now in Peace”

Go now in peace, never be afraid;  
God will go with you each hour of ev’ry day.  
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true;  
know God will guide you in all you do.  
Go now in love and show you believe.  
Reach out to others so all the world will see  
God will be there, watching from above.  
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.  
Amen. Amen. Amen.

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**Postlude**

“Noël Suisse” - Louis-Claude Daquin

Scott Horton, organ

*It is our tradition to be seated for the Postlude*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Next Sunday afternoon at 3pm**



*Featuring the Chancel Choir, Handbell Choir  
& Musicians of First Congregational Church*

First Congregational Church of Fresno

*“The Big Red Church”*

2131 N. Van Ness Boulevard

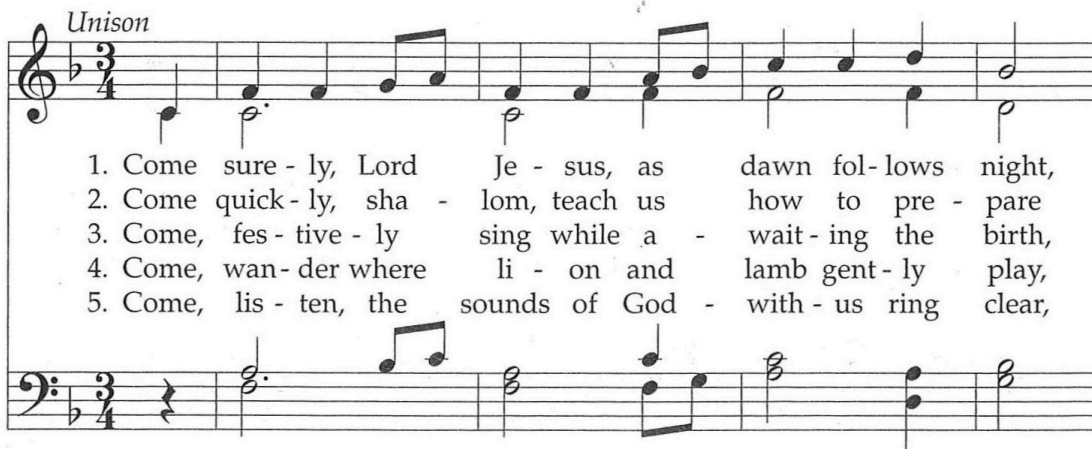
Fresno, CA 93704

559.227.8489

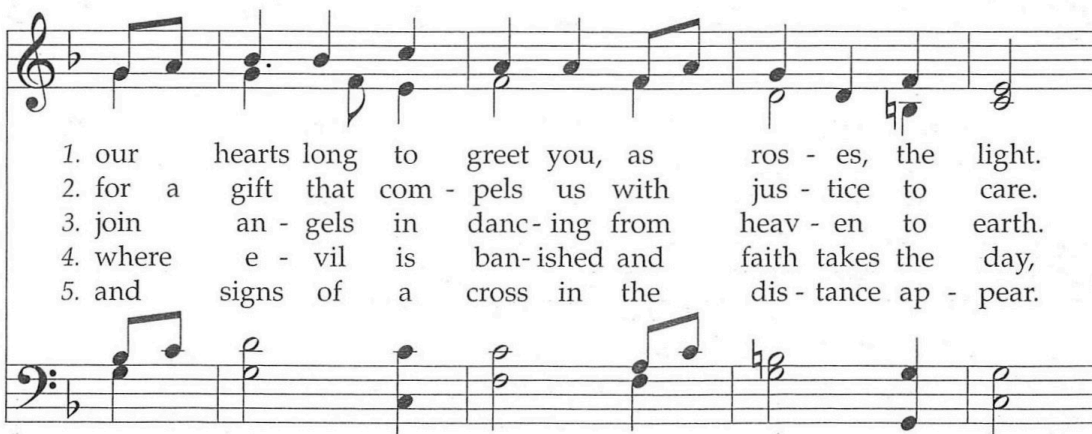
Free Concert - Free-will offering will benefit the Casavant Pipe Organ Fund

# One Candle Is Lit

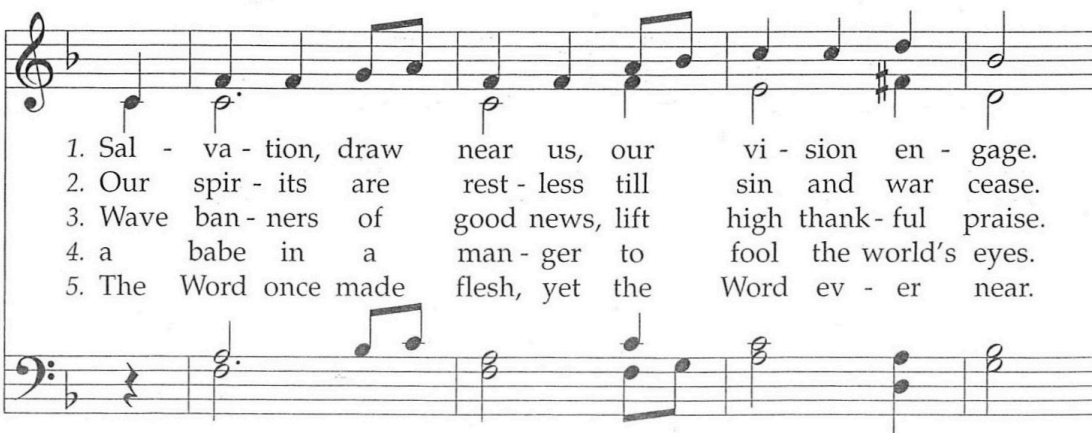
*Unison*



1. Come sure - ly, Lord Je - sus, as dawn fol - lows night,  
2. Come quick - ly, sha - lom, teach us how to pre - pare  
3. Come, fes - tive - ly sing while a - wait - ing the birth,  
4. Come, wan - der where li - on and lamb gent - ly play,  
5. Come, lis - ten, the sounds of God - with - us ring clear,



1. our hearts long to greet you, as ros - es, the light.  
2. for a gift that com - pels us with jus - tice to care.  
3. join an - gels in danc - ing from heav - en to earth.  
4. where e - vil is ban - ished and faith takes the day,  
5. and signs of a cross in the dis - tance ap - pear.



1. Sal - va - tion, draw near us, our vi - sion en - gage.  
2. Our spir - its are rest - less till sin and war cease.  
3. Wave ban - ners of good news, lift high thank - ful praise.  
4. a babe in a man - ger to fool the world's eyes.  
5. The Word once made flesh, yet the Word ev - er near.



1. One can - dle is lit for the hope of the age.  
2. One can - dle is lit for the reign of God's peace.  
3. One can - dle is lit for the joy of these days.  
4. One can - dle is lit for God's lov - ing sur - prise.  
5. One can - dle is lit for the Christ - birth - day here.

# The Baptist Shouts on Jordan's Shore

115

Charles Coffin, 1736

Transl. The New Century Hymnal, 1993

John 1:6-8, 19-28; Mark 1:1-8;  
Luke 3:2-6, 15-18; Matt. 3:1-6, 11-12

1 The Bap - tist shouts on Jor - dan's shore, the  
2 The earth and sky and sea now feel that  
3 Clean up your hearts, lay down the way, for  
4 Through you, O Je - sus, you a - lone sal -

earth shakes with the might - y roar, A - wake, let laz - y  
which their Au - thor will re - veal: The Child now leap - ing  
God ap - proach-es day by day; Pre - pare for such a  
va - tion, so - lace, strength are known; With - out your love we

sleep now flee: be - hold, the voice of proph - e - cy!  
in the womb as God does hu - man form as - sume.  
wor - thy heir, for such a guest your house pre - pare.  
fade like grass, like wilt - ed flowers our lives will pass.

5 Your hands ex-tend, our pain em-brace,  
lift up the pros-trate, show your face;  
Though we in part your beau-ty know,  
O blos-som forth, your splen-dor show.

6 O One who comes to set us free,  
O Child, to you our song will be,  
With Fa-ther, Spir-it moth-er-ing,  
to you shall praise for-ev-er ring!

*Charles Coffin, distinguished scholar and Latin author, was rector of the University of Paris for a time. The hymn, appearing here in a new translation, is from a breviary ordered by the archbishop of Paris to replace ancient Latin hymns with newer ones.*

Tune: WINCHESTER NEW L.M.  
Musikalisches Handbuch, Hamburg, 1690

*Isa. 40:3-11; Ps. 103:15-17**J. Lewis Milligan, 1925; alt.*

1 There's a voice in the wil - der - ness cry - ing, a  
 2 O Zi - on, who of - fers good tid - ings, to the  
 3 But the word of our God is for - ev - er, our De -

call from the ways un - trod: Pre - pare in the des - ert a  
 height of the moun - tains dare! Lift your voice to the cit - ies of  
 fend - er's will is strong; God stands in the midst of

high - way, a high - way for our God! The  
 Ju - dah: "Be - hold your God!" de - clare. Like the  
 na - tions, to ren - der right the wrong. Then

*Before moving to Canada, J. Lewis Milligan was a successful British journalist and poet. This text was written in 1925 to celebrate the union of three churches into The United Church of Canada, a body he served as public relations director.*

Tune: ASCENSION Irr.  
*H. Hugh Bancroft, 1938*

val - leys shall be ex - alt - ed, the loft - y hills brought  
 flowers of the field we per - ish, our hu - man works de -  
 God shall be as a shep-herd, the lambs gath-ered to God's

low: make straight all the crook - ed pla - ces  
 cay, the power and pomp of na - tions  
 breast; and pas - tures of peace shall greet them,

where Em - man - u - el may go!  
 shall pass like a dream a - way.  
 to give to the wea - ry rest.

# Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates

117

Georg Weissel, 1641

Ps. 24:7-10

Transl. Catherine Winkworth, 1865; alt.



1 Lift up your heads, O might-y gates; be-hold the glo - rious Rul - er waits!  
2 Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make it a tem - ple, set a - part  
3 Re - deem - er, come! I o - pen wide my heart to you; here, Christ, a - bidē!  
4 So come, my Sov - ereign; en - ter in! Let new and no - bler life be - gin;



The Sov - ereign One is draw - ing near; the Sav - ior of the world is here.  
From earth - ly use for heaven's em - ploy, a - dorned with prayer and love and joy.  
Let me your in - ner pres - ence feel; your grace and love in me re - veal.  
Your Ho - ly Spir - it guide us on, un - til the glo - rious crown be won.



*Georg Weissel, a Lutheran pastor, served a church in Königsberg, East Prussia. He wrote some twenty hymns, most of them for the great festivals of the church year. This hymn was written for Advent.*

Tune: TRURO L.M.  
*Thomas Williams' Psalmodia Evangelica, 1789*

# Advent Devotional

Advent is the beginning of a new church year—a new *liturgical* year, if you like technical words. As Pastor Simon reminded us, this is when we start again on the journey of faith, beginning with a period of preparation. Maybe you have walked through many Advents, or maybe this will be your first. Either way, we have the great privilege of walking together.

To help synchronize our steps on this journey, we have prepared an Advent Devotional. This is a guide for daily spiritual reading during this season of preparation. Each day, the Advent Devotional presents a reading from scripture together with a reflection to aid your prayer, meditation, or spiritual contemplation.

Christians have been writing, reading, and using daily devotionals for hundreds of years. Continuing this ancient practice together is a way to help us foster our spiritual growth and formation, both as individuals, and as a community.

You can pick up a copy in the Narthex. We look forward to sharing this journey through Advent with you!

## This coming Friday!



### It's the time for giving.

For several years the Outreach Team has given Christmas Gift Packs to the ladies temporarily residing at Naomi's House.

With your help we will be able to fill 34 Gift Packs.

We are in need of the following items:

ITEMS	# NEEDED
Beanies	10
Winter Gloves	10
Shampoo	20 (can be travel size)
Conditioner	22 (can be travel size)
Soap	14 (can be hotel size)
Kleenex	20 (purse size)
Socks	12 (knee highs or tube socks)
Paperback books	26 (can be used; not horror or violent)
Christmas cookies	68 (prefer homemade; two kinds 34 each)



Please notify Marilyn Coles at [toppspnn@gmail.com](mailto:toppspnn@gmail.com) or at 559-903-0635, if you will be able to donate any of the above requested items.

We would love to provide the ladies a gift to open for Christmas with your help.

We will pack the gifts at 9:30 am on Friday, December 13<sup>th</sup> in the Parlor. All are welcome.  
**Thanks to all who provide donations and time.**

## Today following worship service!

Please join us for  
**Advent Family  
TIME**

Big Red Church  
December 8, 2022  
Fellowship Hall  
following worship

There will be crafts  
and carols and  
refreshments

Say  
Hello...  
To  
Christmas!



I am doing a "Christmas Special" Say Hello column (or maybe several, if I get enough responses!) sharing our special Christmas memories and traditions with each other. If you would like to participate, please email me at [maryelainewall@gmail.com](mailto:maryelainewall@gmail.com) with a Christmas memory that you hold dear, laugh at, or get misty over, or a holiday tradition that you have enjoyed.

Please:

- Send it to me by next week,

- Keep the length from a couple of sentences to a paragraph at the most (keeping in mind I will edit as necessary),
- Make it something personal of yours (rather than something you saw, heard, or read that others do).

I will attribute each contribution to the person sending it in. I hope this will be a fun way to share our memories and traditions with one another. Thanks!

- Mary Wall

## Saturday Friends Advent Discussions

Saturday, December 14th  
Marie Calendar's (Shaw and Cedar) - 9:30 A.M.

Using Kate Bowler's "The Weary World Rejoice".

This devotional can be downloaded in three different formats at [Katebowler.com/advent](http://Katebowler.com/advent). Copies of the devotional are being printed. Saturday Friends is asking for a donation of \$5.00 to First Congregational Church of Fresno to cover the costs of printing. Please text Catherine (540.420.0803) to request a printed copy of the devotional.

Come join the discussion on Saturday, December 7th and/or Saturday, December 14th. Please text Catherine if you plan on attending (540.420.0803), so we can meet in the appropriate area of Marie Calendar's. In the meantime, take time to notice the lights of Christmas or look up at the stars and the moon.

# This Week at Big Red

## Monday, December 9

- ♦ 5:00pm: Yoga - Room 1

## Tuesday, December 10

## Wednesday, December 11

- ♦ 12:00pm: Bible Study - Zoom
- ♦ 4:00pm: Yoga - Room 1
- ♦ 6:00pm: Handbells rehearsal - Music Room
- ♦ 7:00pm: Chancel Choir rehearsal - Sanctuary

## Thursday, December 12

## Friday, December 13

- ♦ 9:30am: Christmas Gift Packs assembly for Naomi's House - Parlor

## Saturday, December 14

## Sunday, December 15

- ♦ 9:00am: Exploration Hour - Roots and Branches - Fireside Room
- ♦ 10:00am: Worship - Sanctuary
- ♦ 3:00pm: A Celebration of Christmas - Fellowship Hall

## Save The Dates:

- ♦ BRC Pantry "Free Food Saturday" - Dec 21 - 10:00am
- ♦ Family Friendly Christmas Eve Service - Dec 24 - 4:00pm
- ♦ Traditional Lessons and Carols - Dec 24 - 9:00pm
- ♦ FCCF Annual Meeting - January 26th - following worship service

# First Congregational Church of Fresno

2131 N. Van Ness Blvd., Fresno, CA 93704 | (559) 227-8489

Bigredchurch.org

## **Pastor**

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi  
simon@bigredchurch.org

## **Music Director/Organist**

Scott Horton

## **Office Administrator**

KyMBERly Lindsey  
office@bigredchurch.org

## **Director of Christian Education**

Vanessa Valdez-Johnson  
vanessa@bigredchurch.org

## **Caretaker/ Event Coordinator**

Pat Morales

## **Technicians**

Karisa Garza  
Brad Jenkins

## Assisting in Today's Service

Organist: Scott Horton

Liturgist: Bailey Hill

Ushers: Cliff Dodd, Anthony Ross, Sue Karibian

Lighting of the Advent Candles: Pauline Phillips & Gayle Thornton

Acolytes: Paloma and Addison

## FCCF Open and Affirming Statement

We believe that all people are sacred creations of a loving God. We affirm the diversity that exists among us.

We strive to answer the call of Christ by extending his love, compassion and acceptance to everyone. In this spirit, we open our family of faith to people of every religious background, sexual orientation, family composition, physical and mental ability, race, age and gender.

As Christians, we experience God's reconciling love. In response we stand with those who suffer discrimination, isolation and alienation.

We welcome all people to participate fully in our church's life and ministry. We celebrate the variety of talents and perspectives which flow into our spiritual community, continuing to enrich us in ways we could not have predicted or envisioned.

## Information for Families with Kids:



Families with Infants and Toddlers: If you have any care needs for your infant or toddler during service, Room 1, located in the courtyard, is available. There is a live feed of the service playing in the room.

Families with Kids 3 Years old and older: Kids are welcome to stay with their parents in service until the children's message. After the message, kids can join us in Sunday School. If your kids are joining us in Sunday School for the first time, please scan the QR code and fill out the form online. Thank you!



We believe God wants to liberate those in bondage. If you are a victim of domestic violence we encourage you to find safety. 559.233.HELP  
[Help@MMCenter.org](mailto:Help@MMCenter.org)