

Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2023



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**)

Prelude "Prelude on Adeste Fideles" - M. Eithun Handbells
"In the Bleak Midwinter" - arr. A.L. Page
"Patapan" - S. Nelson Handbells & Nancy Mack

Welcome Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

Hymn of Approach "One Candle Is Lit" (tune: CRADLE SONG)

*(VS. 3) Come, fes-tive-ly sing while a-wait-ing the birth,
Join an-gels in danc-ing from heav-en to earth.
Wave bann-ners of good news, lift high thank-ful praise.
One can-dle is lit for the Joy of these days.*

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Lighting the Candle of Peace Steven Means, Michael Camunez,
Faith and Olivia Camunez

O magnify our God with me and let us exalt God's name together.

Our souls magnify the Lord.

Our spirits rejoice in God our Savior!

We will bless the Lord at all times;

God's praise shall continually be in our mouths.

Our souls magnify the Lord.

God's mercy endures from generation to generation.

Let our souls make their boasts in the Lord;

Let the humble hear and be glad.

Our souls magnify the Lord

For the Mighty One has done great things.

***Hymn** "Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn" #107, pew hymnal

Prayer for Transformation Pete Espinoza, liturgist

Let us pray:

Womb of Creation, we often get caught up in what we do not have –

The material things we lack, the access and privilege we may lack, the answers, even, that seem to escape us in crucial moments.

Forgive us for the times we forgot to remember you.

Hold us accountable for the moments we failed to see you in the blessings of ages past.

Help us reconnect with our joy and our gratitude. Remind us to name our joys, our miracles, our deliverances, our redemptions one by one by one, for you are there in them all.

WORDS OF GRACE

Choral Anthem

“Gentle Mary Laid Her Child” - K. Hoefler

Chancel Choir

Jane Davis-Maldonado, piano

Time for Discovery [*children are invited to the chancel steps with the Pastor*]

***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

“Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming”

#127, pew hymnal

Scripture

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Pete Espinoza

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light.

This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but he confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said,

“I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness,

‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ ” as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Why, then, are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the strap of his sandal.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

Liturgist: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God within us, and for the Word of God amongst us.

Congregation: *Thanks be to God.*

Sermon

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

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.

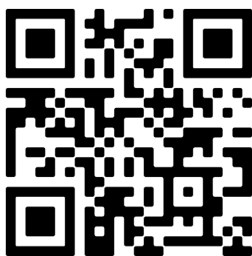
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The Church at Prayer

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

Invitation to Generosity

Pete Espinoza



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 with your smartphone camera.*
- ⇒ *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

“Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

Scott Horton, organ

***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.***

Hymn

"Joy to the World"

#132, 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

"Fum, Fum, Fum!" - R. Lund

Scott Horton, organ

It is our tradition to be seated for the Postlude.

**Please join us in the Fellowship Hall for Coffee Hour immediately following the
worship service.**

This Week at Big Red

Monday, December 18

- ♦ 5:00pm: Yoga - Room 1

Tuesday, December 19

Wednesday, December 20

- ♦ 8:00am: Bible Study - Zoom
- ♦ 6:00pm: Handbell rehearsal - Music Room
- ♦ 7:00pm: Chancel Choir rehearsal - Sanctuary

Thursday, December 21

- ♦ 7:00pm: Blue Christmas Service - Minturn Chapel

Friday, December 22

Saturday, December 23

- ♦ 10:00am: BRC Pantry "Free Food Saturday" - Fellowship Hall

Sunday, December 24

- ♦ 10:00am: Family Friendly Worship - Sanctuary
- ♦ 11:00am: Coffee Hour
- ♦ 9:00pm: Lessons and Carols - Sanctuary

Upcoming Dates to remember

- * **Blue Christmas 7pm - December 21**
- * **Christmas Eve Family Friendly Worship Service 10am - Dec 24**
- * **Christmas Eve Lessons and Carol Service 9pm - Dec 24**
- * **Guest Pastor - Rev. Dr. Norman Broadbent - Dec 31**
- * **Epiphany - Jan 7**
- * **"Let's Eat Out" BRC Pantry Fundraiser at Old Spaghetti Factory - Jan 23**
- * **Annual Meeting - Jan 28**



***Sunday, December 17th
3:00 p.m.***

*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

TODAY IS THE LAST DAY TO ORDER!

For your convenience: Please place order form with payment into offering plate



Flowers for Christmas Eve Lessons and Carols Service

If you would like to contribute to the sanctuary flowers for Christmas Eve, please consider donating a flower in memory of or in honor of a loved one or friend. Please complete the form and add \$15 (cash, check made out to FCCF, or the Givelify App) and place in the offering plate, give to an usher, or mail to the office. The form and money need to be received by Sunday, December 17th.

In memory / in honor of: (circle one) Please print name.

Your name and _____
Phone number

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Pastor

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi
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Scott Horton

Caretaker/ Event Coordinator

Pat Morales

Accountant

Penny Leas Peterson

Office Administrator

Kymberly Lindsey
Office@bigredchurch.org

Technicians

Karisa Garza
Brad Jenkins

Assisting in Today's Service

Organist: Scott Horton

Liturgist: Pete Espinoza

Ushers: Cliff Dodd, Rebecca Kliwer, Teresa Fuentes, Mike Gostanian

Candle Lighters: Steven Means, Michael, Faith and Olivia Camunez

Acolytes: Makenna and Faith

Technician: Karisa Garza

Coffee Hour: Kymberly Lindsey and Pat Morales

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.

Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn

Isa. 12:6; 26:9; 35:6; Matt. 11:5

Marty Haugen, 1983; rev. 1993

1 A - wake! a - wake, and greet the new morn, for
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -
 3 In deep - est night Christ's com - ing shall be, when
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though

an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing, sing out your joy, for
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, whose hum - ble song is
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so
 cold the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall

Je - sus is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing.
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less;

Liturgical composer Marty Haugen wrote both words and music for this Advent hymn with the twofold aim of providing an easy congregational chorale and utilizing the images of the Isaiah passages.

Tune: REJOICE, REJOICE 9.8.9.8.8.7.8.9.
 Marty Haugen, 1983

D D/F# G D Em Am D

Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -
 Mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing
 One with - out voice breaks forth in song, a lame one leaps in
 Love be our song and love our prayer, and love, our end - less

Em D7 G C B7 Em

geth - er, to o - pen wide the heaven - ly door, and
 kind - ness, the thun - der of the an - thems roll to
 won - der, the weak are raised a - bove the strong, and
 sto - ry, may God fill ev - ery day we share, and

Am7 D7 G 1-3 G/B C 4 G/B C G

lives now in-side us for ev - er. . . .
 shat - ter all hate and in - jus - tice. . . .
 weap-ons are bro-ken a - sun - der. . . .
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry. . . .

1-3 4

Es ist ein' Ros entsprungen

(Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming)

Isa. 11:1

German, 15th century; transl. Theodore Baker, 1894; alt.

1 Es ist ein' Ros ent - sprun-gen aus ein - er Wur - zel zart,
 1 Lo, how a Rose e'er bloom-ing from ten - der stem has sprung!
 2 I - sa-iah had fore - told it, the Rose I have in mind,

wie uns die Al - ten sun - gen: von Jes - se kam die Art
 Of Jes-se's lin-eage com - ing as saints of old have sung.
 With Mar-y we be - hold it, the Vir - gin Moth - er kind.

und hat ein Blüm-lein bracht mit - ten im kal - ten
 It came a flower-et bright, a - mid the cold of
 To show God's love a - right, she bore to us a

Win - ter wohl zu der hal - ben Nacht.
 win - ter, when half spent was the night.
 Sav - ior, when half spent was the night.

Possibly dating from the fifteenth century, this anonymous hymn was first published in a Catholic hymnal in Germany, where the rose was held in special regard and was employed as a symbol for Mary or for Christ.

Tune: ES IST EIN' ROS 7.6.7.6.6.7.6.
 Catholische Geistliche Kirchengesäng, Cologne, 1599
 Harm. Michael Praetorius, 1609

Joy to the World!

132

Isaac Watts, 1719; alt.

Ps. 98:4-9; Luke 2:11-15

1 Joy to the world! the Lord is come: let earth its
 2 Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their
 3 Christ rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the

prais - es bring; Let ev - ery heart pre - pare Christ room,
 songs em - ploy; While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 na - tions prove The glo - ries of God's righ - teous - ness

and heaven and na - ture sing, and heaven and na - ture
 re - peat the sound-ing joy, re - peat the sound-ing
 and won - ders of God's love, and won - ders of God's

and heaven and na - ture sing, and
 re - peat the sound-ing joy, re -
 and won - ders of God's love, and

sing, and heaven, and heaven and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound-ing joy.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of God's love.

heaven and na - ture sing,
 peat the sound-ing joy,
 won - ders of God's love,

Stanza 1 may be sung, "Joy to the world! the Sovereign comes: . . ."

Isaac Watts, an English Congregationalist, freely paraphrased
 Old Testament psalms to glorify Christ and here develops a
 hymn of advent and nativity from a psalm.

Tune: ANTIOCH C.M.
 Lowell Mason, 1836