

Second Sunday of Lent

February 25, 2024



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

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi
Pastor

Second Sunday of Lent
February 25, 2024

Our Gathering

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

Prelude

"Rondeau" - H. Purcell
"Deep River" - arr. D. Wagner

Scott Horton, organ
Handbell Choir

Welcome

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

Centering Psalm 22:23-31

Robbyn Mosley, cantor

(The Congregation sings the *Response with the Choir*)

Response Antiphon: Marty Haugen, 1994

Unison



O God, do not be far a-way; O God, do not be far a-way.

You who fear God, praise God! All you descendants of Jacob, glorify God!

Stand in awe, all you descendants of Israel!

For God has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one;

God has not hidden God's face from me but heard when I cried to God.

Sung Response: O God, do not be far away; O God, do not be far away.

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;

My vows I will pay before those who fear God.

The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise God.

May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to God,

and all the families of the nations will worship before God,

for dominion belongs to God and God rules over the nations.

Sung Response: O God, do not be far away; O God, do not be far away.

To God, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down;

before God shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for God.

Posterity will serve God; future generations will be told about God.

They will proclaim God's righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: God has done it!

Sung Response: O God, do not be far away; O God, do not be far away.

*Call to Worship

Randy Oftedal, liturgist

Do not be afraid to answer the call to discipleship.

What does the call require?

Letting go of our life as we know it. Following the way of the cross. Aligning our soul with God's.

We step out in the way of Jesus by losing our life to save it.

Do not be afraid to walk in the way of Jesus.

We answer the call, unashamed and unafraid. Amen.

*Hymn

"The God of Abraham Praise"

#24, pew hymnal

Prayer of Confession

Randy Oftedal

Holy God, sometimes we think we know better than you do. We make our own attempts to save ourselves and others from the cross filled path you have called us to walk. Help us to get behind you, because it has become easier to rely upon ourselves, rather than on your strength and presence. Grant us grace and help us to let go of our need for control so that you and your way might be our guide and path forward. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Special Music

"Nothing but the Blood of Jesus" arr. R. Mallory

Handbell Choir

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

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

**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 cloth to place on the cross-*

***Hymn** "O Savior, Let Me Walk with You" #503, pew hymnal

Scripture Mark 8:31-38 Randy Oftedal

Liturgist: God be in our listening. God be in our understanding.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Genesis 17:1-7 Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

Pastor: For the Word of God in Scripture, for the Word of God within us, and for the Word of God among us.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

Message Roman Rain Tree & Rev. Simon Biasell

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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Prayers of the Church

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

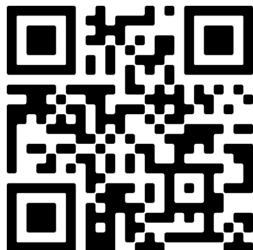
Invitation to Generosity

Randy Oftedal

Offertory

"I Must Tell Jesus" - arr. L. Shackley

Chancel Choir



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.*

*** Doxology**

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

***Dedication**

***Closing Hymn**

"Lead Us From Death to Life"

#581, pew hymnal

***Benediction**

***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

"Ukrainian National Anthem" - M. Verbytsky

Scott Horton, organ

It is our tradition to be seated for the Postlude.

TODAY at 3pm



Galloway Memorial Organ Evensong

Scott Horton

organist

Sunday, March 3, 2024

3:00 p.m.

Admission Free - Freewill Offering to Benefit
the Casavant Organ Fund

First Congregational Church of Fresno

2131 N. Van Ness Blvd.
(559) 227-8489

Flash Mob Hallelujah Chorus on Easter



Have you ever wanted to sing the “Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s Messiah?

We will be singing this masterpiece as the postlude on Easter Sunday! On Easter, all you will have to do is make your way up to the Chancel area, up with the choir during the singing of “Go Now in Peace,” and we’ll be all set to sing our collective “Hallelujah” to the Risen Lord!

Every Sunday, we will have a single run-through practice, from March 3 following worship until Easter.

Music and practice CDs will be provided.

*Warning - smiles and feelings of joy are side effects.

Please see/contact Scott Horton to get involved or if you have any questions.

This Week at Big Red

Monday, February 26

- ♦ 5:00pm: Yoga - Room 1

Tuesday, February 27

Wednesday, February 28

- ♦ 8:00am: Bible Study - Zoom
- ♦ 5:00pm: Lenten Soup Supper and Discussion - Fellowship Hall
- ♦ 6:00pm: Handbell rehearsal - Music Room
- ♦ 7:00pm: Chancel Choir rehearsal – Sanctuary

Thursday, February 29

Friday, March 1

Saturday, March 2

- ♦ 9:30am: Saturday Lenten Study - “Transformation (Not Perfection)”
Marie Calendar’s (Shaw and Cedar)

Sunday, March 3

- ♦ 9:00am: **Exploration Hour** - Roots and Branches - Fireside Room
- ♦ 10:00am: Worship - Sanctuary
- ♦ 11:00am: Coffee Hour - Fellowship Hall
- ♦ 11:15am: Ministry of Christian Education meeting
- ♦ 3:00pm: Galloway Memorial Organ Evensong - Sanctuary

Upcoming Dates to remember

* **Galloway Memorial Organ Evensong - March 3**

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

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Bigredchurch.org

Pastor

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Assisting in Today's Service

Organist: Scott Horton

Liturgist: Randy Oftedal

Ushers: Richard VanWyhe, Harold Householder

Acolytes: Avery and Addison

Technician: Karisa Garza

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.

Yigdal Elohim Chai

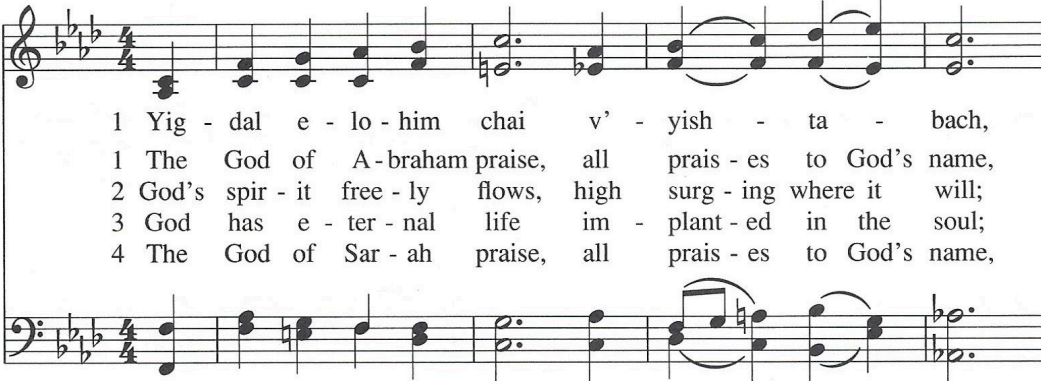
(The God of Abraham Praise)

Gen. 12:1; 17:15-16; Exod. 3:14; Isa. 44:6; Rev. 4:8

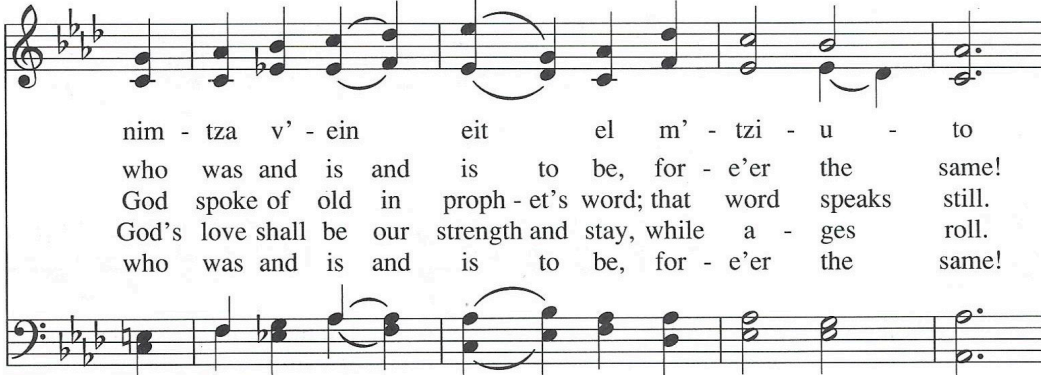
Moses Maimonides, 12th century

Versification attrib. to Daniel ben Judah, c. 1400


Transl. Max Landsberg and Newton Mann, 1884; alt.



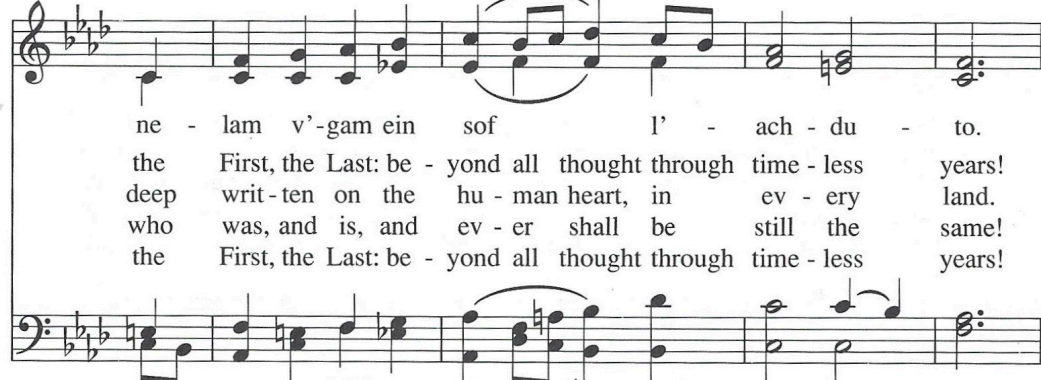
1 Yig - dal e - lo - him chai v' - yish - ta - bach,
 1 The God of A - braham praise, all prais - es to God's name,
 2 God's spir - it free - ly flows, high surg - ing where it will;
 3 God has e - ter - nal life im - plant - ed in the soul;
 4 The God of Sar - ah praise, all prais - es to God's name,



nim - tza v' - ein eit el m' - tzi - u - to
 who was and is and is to be, for - e'er the same!
 God spoke of old in proph - et's word; that word speaks still.
 God's love shall be our strength and stay, while a - ges roll.
 who was and is and is to be, for - e'er the same!



E - chad v' - ein ya - chid k' - yi - chu - do,
 The one e - ter - nal God, be - fore what now ap - pears;
 Es - tab - lished is God's law, and change - less it shall stand,
 All praise the liv - ing God! Ex - tol that hal - lowed name,
 The one e - ter - nal God, be - fore what now ap - pears;

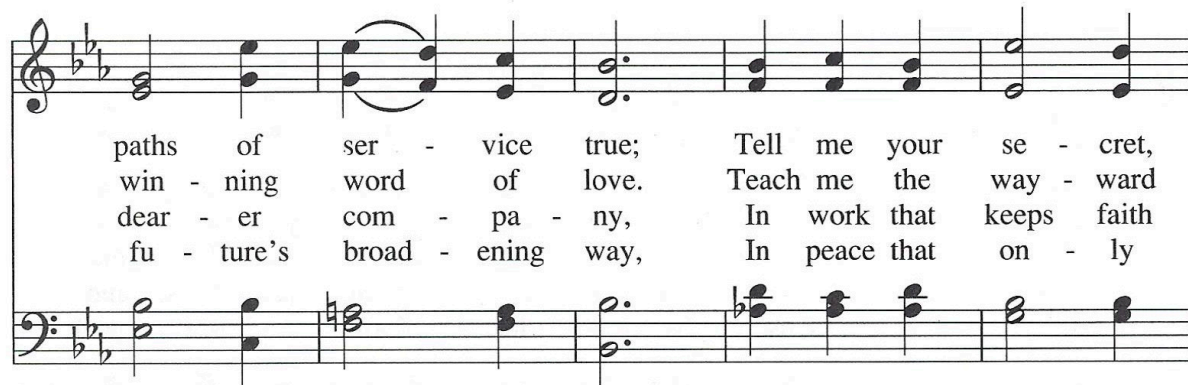


ne - lam v' - gam ein sof I' - ach - du - to.
 the First, the Last: be - yond all thought through time - less years!
 deep writ - ten on the hu - man heart, in ev - ery land.
 who was, and is, and ev - er shall be still the same!
 the First, the Last: be - yond all thought through time - less years!

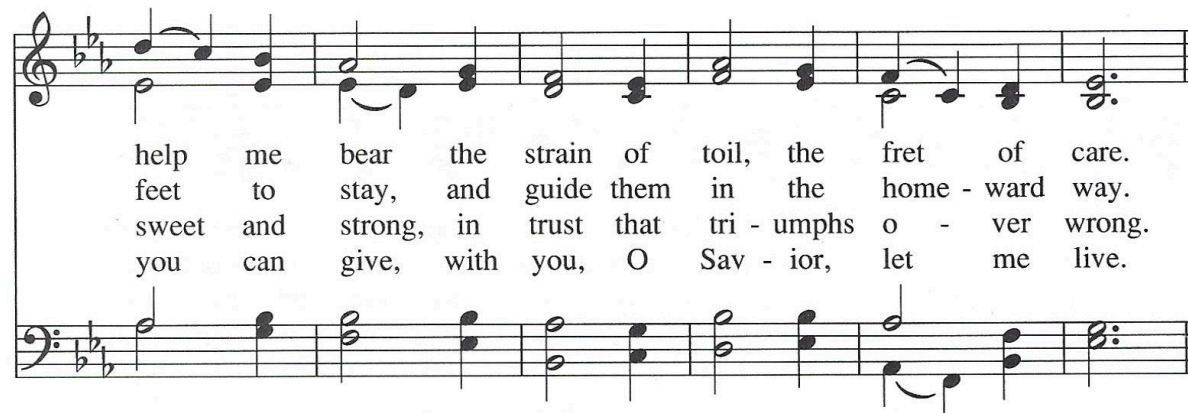
O Savior, Let Me Walk with You

Washington Gladden, 1879; alt.


1 O Sav - ior, let me walk with you in earth - ly
 2 Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear
 3 Teach me your pa - tience; let me be in clos - er,
 4 In hope that sends a shin - ing ray far down the



paths of ser - vice true; Tell me your se - cret,
 win - ning word of love. Teach me the way - ward
 dear - er com - pa - ny, In work that keeps faith
 fu - ture's broad - ening way, In peace that on - ly



help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.
 feet to stay, and guide them in the home - ward way.
 sweet and strong, in trust that tri - umphs o - ver wrong.
 you can give, with you, O Sav - ior, let me live.

Washington Gladden was a Congregational minister, distinguished preacher and lecturer, and author of over thirty works. Gladden wrote extensively on civic and social affairs of his day. This hymn was penned in 1879 and published in his periodical, The Sunday Afternoon.

Tune: MARYTON L.M.
 H. Percy Smith, 1874

Refrain C C7 F G C G/B Am

Lead us from death to life, from false-hood to truth, from de -

Dm7 G C Dm7 C7/E C7 Dm7

spair to hope, from fear to trust. Lead us from hate to

G C/E E7 Am Dm7 G

love, from war to peace; let peace fill our hearts, let

Em Am Dm7 C/E Dm/F C/G G7 C

peace fill our world, let peace fill our u - ni - verse.

to Stanzas

Last time, end

1 Still all the an-gry cries, still all the an-gry guns, still now your
 2 So man-y lone-ly hearts, so man-y bro-ken lives, long-ing for
 3 Let jus-tice ev-er roll, let mer-cy fill the earth, let us be -

peo-ple die, earth's sons and daugh-ters. Let jus-tice roll, let
 love to break in - to their an - guish. Come, teach us love,
 gin to grow in - to your peo - ple. We can be love,

mer - cy pour down, come and teach us your way of com - pas-sion.
 come, teach us peace, come and teach us your way of com - pas-sion.
 we can bring peace, we can still be your way of com - pas-sion.

The text for the refrain of this hymn is known as the "World Peace Prayer." It is a paraphrase of a verse from the Upanishads, the most ancient scriptures of Hinduism. Since its introduction at a service in Westminster Abbey on Hiroshima Day, 1981, the prayer has been translated into numerous languages and circulated around the world. The musical setting and additional stanzas were composed by Marty Haugen, composer-in-residence at Mayflower United Church of Christ, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Tune: WORLD PEACE PRAYER
 12.11.9.10. with refrain
 Marty Haugen, 1985