

Fifth Sunday of Lent

March 17, 2024



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

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi
Pastor

Fifth Sunday of Lent
March 17, 2024

Our Gathering

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

Prelude

"A Collection of Irish Favorites"
"Be Thou My Vision" - arr. Hal Hopson

Scott Horton, piano
Handbell Choir

Welcome

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

Centering Psalm 51:1-4; 6-12

Catherine English, cantor

(The Congregation sings the *Response with the Choir*

Response
C F (Dm7) Em7 Antiphon: Emma Lou Diemer, 1994
(FM7) G C

Cre - ate in me a clean heart, O God.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. The voice part is on a single staff with a treble clef, and the piano accompaniment is on two staves (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one flat (B-flat major or D minor), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics written below the notes. The piano accompaniment provides a harmonic foundation with chords and moving lines in both hands.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
For I know my transgressions and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you alone, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless when you pass judgment.

Create in me a clean heart, O God

You desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have crushed rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Create in me a clean heart, O God

***Call to Worship**

Mary Stegall, liturgist

New life rises!

That which rises, must first fall and die.

Single grains merely remain as they are unless they are released to the ground.

The grains of the earth that fall will multiply and nourish.

Come, die to the self and live a life of service to the Living God.

And God will raise us up anew. Amen.

***Hymn**

“Hope of the World”

#46, pew hymnal

Prayer of Confession

Mary Stegall

God of love, we confess that our ego can all too often get in the way of our ability to serve you and others with our lives. Our false self is driven by our lack of trust in you to provide for our every need. We rely on our own strength. But, our true self can let go and be formed anew by your love. Forgive us our false ways and transform us and raise us to new life. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

Special Music

“Swing Low/Deep River” - arr. Brenda Austin

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** "Be Now My Vision" #451, pew hymnal

Scripture John 12:20-33 Mary Stegall

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

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Jeremiah 31: 31-34 Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD, for I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more.

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.

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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Prayers of the Church

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi

Invitation to Generosity

Mary Stegall

Offertory

"I'd Rather Have Jesus" - arr. T. Fettke

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 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.*

***Dedication**

***Closing Hymn**

"Now Is the Time Approaching"

#609, 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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It is our tradition to be seated for the Postlude.

Maundy Thursday Service

March 28, 2024 - 6:30 p.m.
Commemorate Jesus' Last Supper
with a Meal, Communion, and
Tenebrae Service
Childcare will be provided for

Toddlers through first graders



The last supper centers on Jesus' ministry of true inclusion and belonging. In the spirit of belonging, the Big Red Church opens its doors to all and welcomes you to our table for Maundy Thursday supper. Please join us for an evening of food, drink and prayer, as we anticipate the coming resurrection of Christ.

Please contact Catherine English by Wednesday, March 20 (for a head count):
office@bigredchurch.org or phone 540.420.0803



Easter Cupcake Extravaganza!
Bring your Easter cupcakes on Easter Sunday before worship service, for our Annual Coffee Hour Easter Treat

Please bring your Easter candy and plastic eggs to the church for our annual Easter Egg Hunt no later than Friday 3/29/2024



Cambridge Ave Yard Sale

Saturday Apr 6th

Do you have stuff you would love to part with? Would you like to make a little cash? Do you want to help out the church? Yes...great. Spots are available for the yard sale. \$20 gets you a prime spot in front of the church and you keep all you earn. Applications on the table in the Narthex.





Flowers for Easter Worship Service

*You are invited to contribute \$15 for a potted plant in the sanctuary for the Easter Worship Service or future flowers in the courtyard flower beds. The donation may be given in memory of or in honor of a loved one or friend. If interested, 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, March 24th**.*

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

_____ and _____
Your name phone number

___ I would like to take home a potted plant after the Easter Worship Service.

___ I would like the donation to go toward maintaining the courtyard flower beds.



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

TODAY AT 11:00am

**Special Coffee Hour
Celebration**

Monday, March 18

- ♦ 5:00pm: Yoga - Room 1

Tuesday, March 19

Wednesday, March 20

- ♦ 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, March 21

Friday, March 22

Saturday, March 23

- ♦ 9:30am: Saturday Lenten Study - "Truths and Trials" Reflecting on Holy Week
Marie Calendar's - Fresno

Sunday, March 24 - Palm Sunday

- ♦ 9:00am: Exploration Hour - Roots and Branches - Fireside Room
- ♦ 10:00am: Worship - Sanctuary
- ♦ 11:00am: Coffee Hour - Fellowship Hall

First Congregational Church of Fresno

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

Bigredchurch.org

Pastor

Rev. Simon Biasell-Moshrefi
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Office Administrator

Kymberly Lindsey
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Music Director/Organist

Scott Horton

Technicians

Karisa Garza
Brad Jenkins

Caretaker/ Event Coordinator

Pat Morales

Accountant

Penny Leas Peterson

Assisting in Today's Service

Organist: Scott Horton

Liturgist: Mary Stegall

Ushers: Bruce Owdom, Bob McParland, Sue Karibian

Acolytes: Faith and Makenna

Technician: Brad Jenkins

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.

Hope of the World

Georgia Harkness, 1954; alt.

1 Hope of the world, O Christ of great com - pas - sion,
 2 Hope of the world, God's gift of our re - demp - tion,
 3 Hope of the world, who by the cross did save us
 4 Hope of the world, O Christ, o'er death vic - to - rious,

speak to our fear - ful hearts by con - flict torn.
 bring - ing to hun - gry souls the bread of life,
 from death and sad de - spair, from sin and guilt,
 who by this sign did con - quer grief and pain,

Save us your peo - ple from con - sum - ing pas - sion,
 Still let your Spir - it un - to us be giv - en
 We ren - der back the love your mer - cy gave us;
 We would be faith - ful to your gos - pel glo - rious;

from false pur - suits through which our lives are worn.
 to heal earth's wounds and end its bit - ter strife.
 take back our lives and use them as you will.
 our Sov - ereign who for - ev - er more shall reign!

Author of many books in her field and an internationally recognized teacher, Georgia Harkness was one of the leading women theologians of her generation. This text was written for the Second General Assembly of the World Council of Churches.

Tune: ANCIENT OF DAYS 11.10.11.10
 J. Albert Jeffrey, 1886
 Adapt. The New Century Hymnal, 1992

Be Now My Vision

*Ancient Irish text, c. 8th century; transl. Mary E. Byrne, 1905**Versified by Eleanor H. Hull, 1912; adapt.*

Unison

1 Be now my vi - sion, O God of my heart;
 2 Be now my wis - dom, and be my true word;
 3 Rich - es I need not, nor life's emp - ty praise,
 4 Sov - ereign of heav - en, my vic - to - ry won,

noth - ing sur - pass - es the love you im - part—
 ev - er with - in me, my soul is as - sured;
 you, my in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways;
 may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heav - en's Sun!

You my best thought, by day or by night,
 Moth - er and Fa - ther, you are both to me,
 You and you on - ly are first in my heart,
 Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,

wak - ing or sleep - ing, your pres - ence my light.
 now and for - ev - er your child I will be.
 great God, my trea - sure, may we nev - er part.
 still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Dating from the eighth century or earlier, this Irish hymn was translated into prose by Mary Byrne. It was then versified by Eleanor Hull, author of several books on Irish literature and history. David Evans arranged the Irish melody for this text in 1927.

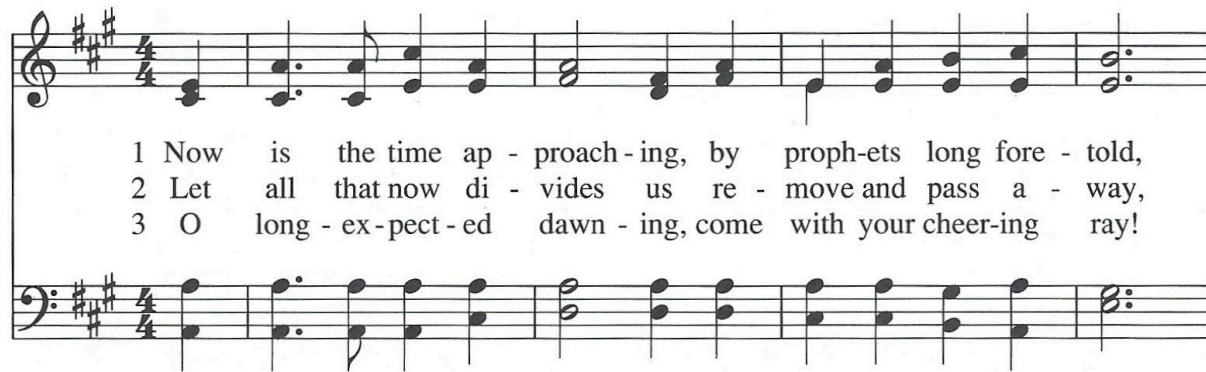
*Tune: SLANE 10.10.9.10.
 Traditional Irish melody
 Harm. David Evans, 1927*

Now Is the Time Approaching

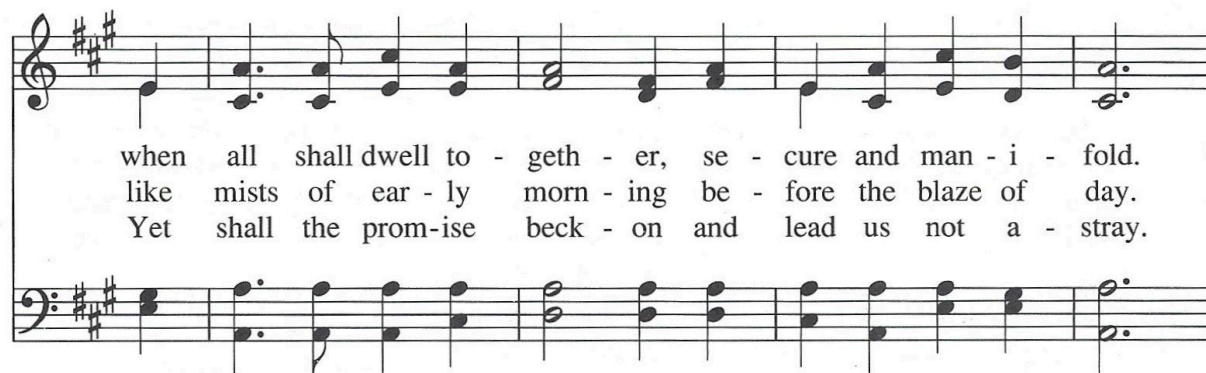
609

Jane Laurie Borthwick, 1859; alt.

Jer. 33:14-16; Isa. 11:6-9; 61:11



1 Now is the time ap - proach - ing, by proph-ets long fore - told,
 2 Let all that now di - vides us re - move and pass a - way,
 3 O long - ex - pect - ed dawn - ing, come with your cheer - ing ray!



when all shall dwell to - geth - er, se - cure and man - i - fold.
 like mists of ear - ly morn - ing be - fore the blaze of day.
 Yet shall the prom - ise beck - on and lead us not a - stray.



Let war be learned no long - er, let strife and tu - mult cease,
 Let all that now u - nites us more sweet and last - ing prove,
 O sweet an - tic - i - pa - tion! It cheers the watch - ers on



all earth a bless - ed gar - den that God shall tend in peace.
 a clos - er bond of un - ion, in bless - ed lands of love.
 to pray, and hope, and la - bor till Christ's new realm is come.

Jane Laurie Borthwick's text titled "Anticipation of Heaven" was published in her *Thoughts for Thoughtful Hours* (1859). George J. Webb, American organist and music publisher, originally wrote this music for a secular song, "Tis dawn, the lark is singing."

Tune: WEBB 7.6.7.6.D.
 George J. Webb, 1837