Sunday Service of Celebration
March 22, 2020 • 10 a.m.
Fourth Sunday in Lent

Our mission:

to be a visible and prophetic presence in the church and in the world,
to steadfastly proclaim the radically inclusive love of God,
to be open to, and celebrate differences; to honor thinking for oneself,
to faithfully work for the inclusion of, and justice for all people, regardless of
age, gender, disability, sexual orientation, marital status, race or national
origin, or any particular element of a person’s total humanity, and for all of
God’s creation.

Onsite Worship Team
The Rev. Elena Larssen, Senior Minister
Curtis Heard, Music Director
Dr. Marc Dickey, Keyboards
Tracy Halter-Balin, Associate Music Director
The Studio 241 Quartet: Megan O’Toole, soprano; Lisa Bode Heard, alto;
   Carlos Carlos, tenor; George Carson, bass
Dr. Shom Dasgupta-Tsinikas, Liturgist
Tina Datsko de Sánchez, Liturgist
David MacEwan, Audio Tech
Jose Garcia, Web Tech

Please join in where words are shown in bold type.

SOUND OF THE SINGING BOWL

PRELUDE: In Paradisum from "The Requiem," by Gabriel Fauré – Dr. Dickey
CALL TO COMMUNITY – Rev. Larssen
One: Jesus was walking when he saw a man who had been born blind.
Two: Without sight, the man lived as a beggar the whole of his life.
One: It was a sabbath day, a day to rest. No work was to be done.
Two: There were limits to be observed, boundaries to be kept. It was for the good of all.
One: But Jesus healed the man, bridged the distance between two people. The distance between one life and another.
Two: The distance was not between hands and faces, but between hearts. Let’s come together this morning, connecting our hearts in community!

HYMN: Ladybug, by James Stein

Don’t disturb the ladybug, sleeping by the spider’s web.
And if you see a butterfly, don’t try to catch it in your net.
It’s taken such a long, long time, to make this very special place
Open up your soul and mind to all it has to say.

Be still, take it in a while. Feel the sunshine warm upon your face.
You’ll feel, when it makes you smile,
That you’re welcome to the human race.

Everybody sees the fire, of what this life can really be.
No one sees like you can see, when you let your mind flow free.
The wind is blowing through the trees,
A song that everyone can learn.
And God is playing hide and seek, everywhere you turn.

Be still, take it in a while. Feel the sunshine warm upon your face.
You’ll feel, when it makes you smile,
That you’re welcome to the human race.

PRAYER OF INVOCATION: For the Interim Time, by John O’Donohue – Tina Datsko de Sánchez

....
You are in this time of the interim
Where everything seems withheld.

The path you took to get here has washed out;
The way forward is still concealed from you.
"The old is not old enough to have died away;
The new is still too young to be born."

You cannot lay claim to anything;
In this place of dusk,
Your eyes are blurred;
And there is no mirror.

Everyone else has lost sight of your heart
And you can see nowhere to put your trust;
You know you have to make your own way through.

As far as you can, hold your confidence.
Do not allow confusion to squander
This call which is loosening
Your roots in false ground,
That you might come free
From all you have outgrown.

What is being transfigured here in your mind,
And it is difficult and slow to become new.
The more faithfully you can endure here,
The more refined your heart will become
For your arrival in the new dawn.

(From To Bless the Space Between Us © 2008 by John O’Donohue)

WORDS OF WELCOME AND PASSING THE PEACE – Rev. Larssen
WELCOME SONG

O, may our hearts and minds be o-pened, Fling the church doors o-pen wide. May there be room e-nough for ev-ry-one in-side. For in God there is a wel-come, In God we all be-long. May that wel-come be our song.

Text: David Lohman
Music: David Lohman
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TIME WITH OUR CHILDREN – Rev. Larssen

PREPARATION FOR PRAYER: Listening for Wisdom
Poem by Tina Datsko de Sánchez, music by Curtis Heard

We tune our hearing to silence.
We wait on the source of being.
Our minds release the roar of thoughts.

We incline our hearts to listen
for the still small voice of Wisdom.
It is Sophia who beckons.
Holy Wisdom, be now among us,
fill our hearts with your dancing light,
give us to know our true being.

Let us be beacons of God’s peace,
shining with the light of justice,
living out God’s love in the world.

SERVICE OF PRAYER
Sound of the Tingsha cymbals
   The sounds of the cymbals call us to a time of silence and meditation.
A Moment of Silence
Pastoral Prayer – Rev. Larssen
Our Common Prayer
   Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,
   Source of all that is and that shall be, Father and Mother of us all,
   Loving God, in whom is heaven:
   May the hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
   The way of your justice be followed by the people of the earth!
   With the bread we need today, feed us.
   For the hurts we inflict on one another, forgive us.
   In the time of temptation and test, strengthen us.
   From trials too great to endure, spare us.
   From the grip of all that is evil, free us.
   For your reign is in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever.
   Amen.

HYMN #606: Nearer My God

   Nearer, my God, to you, nearer to you,
   I’ll bear the cross as Christ calls me to do
   and pray each day anew;
   Nearer my God, to you, nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

   When I am wandering as Jacob did,
   and in the deepest night the path is hid,
   my dreams will bring me, too,
   Nearer my God, to you, nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

   Continued on next page
Let Jacob’s ladder fill the sky above,  
and angels carry down the faith and love  
to keep this goal in view:  
Nearer my God, to you, nearer my God, to you, nearer to you.

CONTEMPORARY READING – Tina Datsko de Sánchez,  
Shom Dasgupta-Tsinikas

From “Thirty Poems of Wisdom”  
By Tina Datsko de Sánchez  
Kaqchikel Maya translation by Shom Dasgupta-Tsinikas

Week 4

Really seeing is believing. Look there  
at sunlight illuminating new pomegranate leaves,  
their red tips glowing with possibility  
and even a kind of certainty: Spring is coming.

That light is God’s caress, God’s laughter,  
God’s invitation to join the riotous song and dance.

Toq qitzij yojtzu’un, qitzij yojniman. Tatz’u chi la’  
Ri q’ij nuya’ saqil chi rij ri räx ruxaq kaqximal che’,

Ri taq ruxaq che’ yekäqirisan chuqa’ yech’ich’an ruma ri oyob’ejqalem  
qitzij wi chi ri jaqajäb’ xtípe.

Ruma la saqil la’ nqana’ ri rajo’wab’äl ri Ajaw, nqana’ rutze’en ri Ajaw,  
Ri Ajaw yojruk’utuj chiqe, chi röj yojb’ixan k’îy k’îy chuqa’ yojxajon k’îy k’îy.

SCRIPTURE: John 9:1-17 – Tina Datsko de Sánchez

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked  
him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind  
so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him  
who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as  
I am in the world, I am the light of the world."  
When he had said this, he spat
on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the
man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means
Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,"Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like
him."

He kept saying, "I am the man."

But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?"

He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and
said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received
my sight."

They said to him, "Where is he?"

He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it
was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the
Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not
observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner
perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind
man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

He said, "He is a prophet."

SPECIAL MUSIC: *Pie Jesu*, from “Requiem” by Gabriel Fauré –
Megan O’Toole, soprano

SERMON: “2020 Vision: How Shall We See” – Rev. Larssen
OFFERING
The Invitation – Tina Datsko de Sánchez
Offertory: Pastorale, by Louis Vierne – Dr. Dickey

We thank you for your generosity during these unusual times. Please make your gift online or mail a check to:
First Congregational Church
241 Cedar Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90802
Or give online at: http://bit.ly/2BT1B4P
Donations to the One Great Hour of Sharing Offering may be made online here:
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Doxology: Old Hundredth (Hymn # 7)
Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;
Praise God with all the hosts above;
Praise God in wonder, joy and love.

Prayer of Dedication – Tina Datsko de Sánchez

HYMN #451: Be Now My Vision

Be now my vision, O God of my heart; nothing surpasses the love you impart – You my best thought, by day or by night, waking or sleeping, your presence my light.

Be now my wisdom, and be my true word; ever within me, my soul is assured; Mother and Father, you are both to me now and forever your child I will be.

Benediction – Rev. Larssen

Choral Response: Living Our Wisdom
Poetry by Tina Datsko de Sánchez, music by Curtis Heard

Holy Wisdom, in gratitude we go as beacons of God’s peace, Flames of justice, the light of God we show; God’s love will never cease.
POSTLUDE *March (Op. 54, No. 3)*, by Edvard Grieg – Dr. Dickey

*Parish Joys and Concerns*

Please remember Myka Godwin, Nyla Jefferson, and Akil Harris (family members of Yvonne SaMarion who have Covid-19); Desi Keller Blundell (Ruth Keller's relative); Andy Hale, former Scoutmaster of the troop meeting at FCCLB, upon the death of his wife Irene; Beau Chandler; Michele Dobson, Dante, and Meara; and Micah Turner, deployed with the Army in the Middle East.

*Get a Buddy through Congregational Care*

During this unusual time, we are pairing people in a First Church Buddy system. If you would like to be a buddy and make a connection, please email or call the church office and leave a message: *care@firstchurchlb.org*.

*Birthdays This Week*

23  Shelby Johnson, Tim Mountain, Micah Turner  
24  Randall Goddard, Jerry Mitchell  
25  J. J. Halter, Erin O'Keefe  
26  Maria Alarcon, David Cartwright  
26  Margaret Jacoby  
28  Marion Hinze

*Summer Activities for Children and Youth!*

**Vacation Bible School**  
June 22-26, 9 am - 4 pm, plus option for care until 5 pm  
Bayshore Community Church

Bayshore Church has invited all FCCLB kids age 4 and older to participate in a fun-filled week that includes vocal choir, handbells/chimes, dance, visual arts and crafts, games, special activities, Bible story time, and learning and growing together through worship, service, and more! Investment: $100/child.
Pilgrim Pines Summer Camp
Pilgrim Pines Summer Camp registration is now open! Pilgrim Pines Camp is an outdoor ministry of the Southern California Nevada Conference, United Church of Christ, that offers summer camp programming for children of all ages! It is a long-time tradition at First Church to send campers to Pilgrim Pines each summer. Conference Youth Ministries camp week is July 26 - August 1.

National Youth Event has been cancelled. It will take place again in 2022.

For more information and links to sign up for these events, see The Pilgrim email newsletter or contact Mary Traylor (mtraylor@firstchurchlb.org).

This Week at First Church
Due to changing circumstances, the church calendar will be shared via email and online:
www.firstchurchlb.org

The Church Staff is primarily working from home.

The Church Campus at 241 Cedar has a staff person onsite from the Maintenance Department in the mornings, M-F, 9-12.

I arise today, through The strength of heaven, The light of the sun,
The radiance of the moon, The splendor of fire, The speed of lightning,
The swiftness of wind, The depth of the sea,
The stability of the earth, The firmness of rock.

I arise today, through God's strength to pilot me, God's might to uphold me,
God's wisdom to guide me, God's eye to look before me,
God's ear to hear me, God's word to speak for me,
God's hand to guard me, God's shield to protect me.

Rev. Larssen is available for phone and in-person counseling by appointment.