

Stories in the City
“As We Forgive Our Debtors”
February 26, 2023



*We thank the
following people
for assisting with
worship:*

HEAD USHER:

Janet Ott

LITURGIST:

Margie Scribner-
Greene

*We love children in
worship—their
noises and wiggles
are welcome, too.
There are pillows in
the front where they
can see the
instruments and
participate fully, or
the coloring, book,
and play area is
available in the
corner near the
windows. Their
movements back and
forth are a joy for us.*

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 26, 2023

10:00 am

*Unlimited forgiveness is not to be confused with sentimental toleration of
hurtful behavior. Christians are often guilty of forgiving too much
and too quickly. ~ Douglas Hare*

*“To forgive is to make a conscious choice to release the person who has
wounded us from the sentence of our judgment, however justified that
judgment may be. It represents a choice to leave behind our resentment and
desire for retribution, however fair such punishment may seem.... Forgiveness
involves excusing persons from the punitive consequences they deserve because
of their behavior. The behavior remains condemned, but the offender is released
from its effects as far as the forgiver is concerned. Forgiveness means the power
of the original wound’s power to hold us trapped is broken.”*

~ Marjorie J. Thompson

PRELUDE

Judy Widrig

INTROIT

"First Born of Mary"

FIRST BORN OF MARY

with a bounce



by John Bell. ©1998 Iona Community / WGRG (North America). Used under OneLicense #A-718199.

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Sharon Benton

RINGING THE BELL

THE STORY

Sharon Benton

*CALL TO WORSHIP

by BibleWorm

Margie Scribner-Greene

One Voice: God's grace is beyond our capacity

All Voices: and so we come to give thanks for forgiveness we can never earn.

One Voice: God's grace demands our response

All Voices: and so we come to learn the ways of faithful living.

One Voice: God's grace is meant to be shared

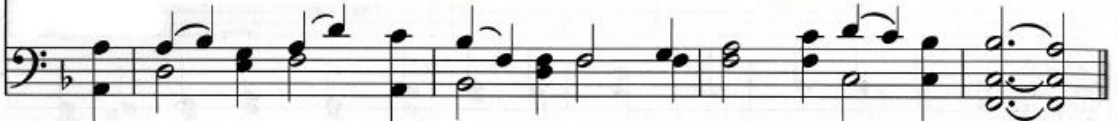
All Voices: and so we come to encounter love and be equipped for loving.



1. We walk a-long through forty days in dis-cip-line and prayer,
2. A - lone in part, but on-ly part, we face the things we dare,
3. So, on this pil-grim-age of love we set out as Jesus' kin
4. And may these days of Lent bring forth a new communion of care,



to find a cen - ter for our lives in faith and ac-tion and care.
sup-port-ed by a com-mun-ity of trust-ed souls who care.
and bring the bles-sings of God's realm, both out-side and within.
of lov - ing folk who walk a-long the rough path that we share.



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Land of Rest CM
Traditional U.S. melody

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Ted & Susan Huffman

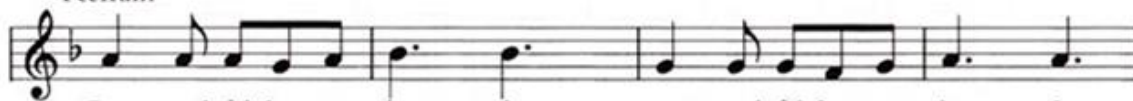
After Time with Children, children are invited to Church School.

SUNG RESPONSE**"Come Into the Streets With Me"****SEE SAW SACCARA DOWN**

Come in-to the streets with me! Come to where the crowds will be,



see a strange and gen - tle king on a don-key tra - vel - ling.

Refrain

Come and fol-low my lea - der, come and fol-low my lea - der,



Je - sus Christ is ri - ding by, come and fol-low my lea - der!

by Shirley Erena Murray. © 1992, Hope Publishing Company. Used under OneLicense #A-718199.

A MOMENT FOR MISSION**Solar Panels Project****Scott Dawson****PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

by Spill the Beans

Margie Scribner-Greene

Loving, forgiving God,
your love and forgiveness knows no bounds.
To the moon and back is how much you love us.
To the depths of the ocean is how far you remove our sin from us.
God, we know that in our heads.
Today, may we feel it in our hearts
and then witness to it in our lives.
Because of your love for us
you entrust to us the capacity to extend that love and forgiveness to others.
God, forgive us when we fail to do that. Free us from all that holds us back.
Convict us with our own forgiveness so that we can go and forgive others.
Where we struggle with the burden of guilt,
free us from the weight we insist on carrying and help us, in our freedom,
to convince others to lay down their burden, too.

KYRIE ELEISON

gently

Cantor: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. ALL: KY - RI - E E - LEI - SON.

Cantor: Chri - ste e - lei - son. ALL: CHRI - STE E - LEI - SON.

Cantor: Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. ALL: KY - RI - E E - LEI - SON.

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ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Sharon Benton

One Voice: God, we proclaim your grace.

All Voices: Grace that holds every story,
grace that redeems every dream,
grace that reveals Love stronger than death.

Give us strength to hear the good news of our own forgiveness,
the good news of our own belovedness.

Give us strength to proclaim belovedness and peace to our siblings.

One Voice: The peace of Christ be with you.

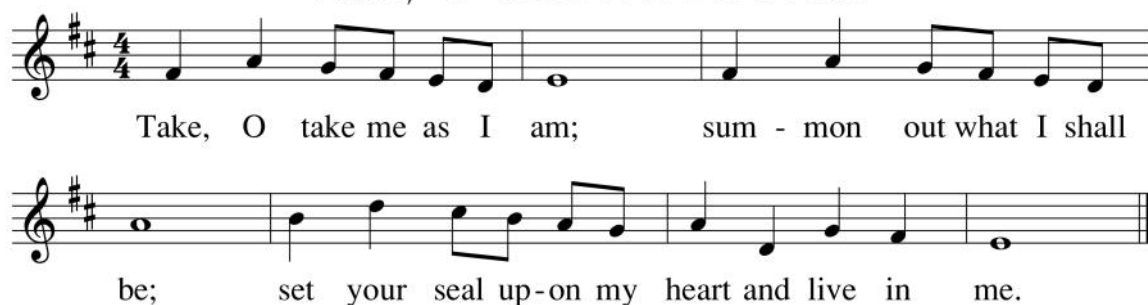
All Voices: And with God's world.

PASSING THE PEACE

Sharon Benton

If you're willing to come to the microphone and offer "The peace of Christ" or "May God's peace be with you" or some other words of grace, please note you are also sending your message to those worshiping on line.

SUNG INVITATION TO PRAYER "Take, O Take Me as I Am"



Text: John L. Bell, b.1949
Tune: John L. Bell, b.1949
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PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Sharon Benton

The Prayer of Jesus

We invite you to use the language for God that is most comfortable for you:

"Our Creator," "Our Father" or "Our Mother."

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,
and the power,
and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

*If you have a prayer request you'd like to share confidentially with our pastors,
have added to the confidential prayer list, or spoken aloud in worship,
go to www.fccb.net/contact-us/ to send a message or call the church to talk with a pastor.*

ANTHEM

"A New Song"

One Accord

by Craig Courtney © Beckenhorst Press. Used under CCS License #12615.

A READING FROM SCRIPTURE

Matthew 18:21-35
New Revised Standard Version

Margie Scribner-Greene

SCRIPTURE RESPONSE

Margie Scribner-Greene

One: For the Word of God in scripture,
for the Word of God among us,
for the Word of God within us:

All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"As We Forgive Our Debtors"

Rev. Sharon Benton



1 God, how can we for - give when bonds of love are torn?
 2 When we have missed the mark, and tears of an - guish flow,
 3 Who dares to throw the stone to damn an - oth - er's sin,



How can we rise and start a - new, our trust re - born?
 how can you still re - lease our guilt, the debt we owe?
 when you, while know - ing all our past, for - give a - gain?



When hu - man lov - ing fails and ev - ery hope is gone,
 The o - cean depth of grace sur - pass - es all our needs.
 No more we play the judge, for by your grace we live.



your love gives strength be - yond our own to face the dawn.
 A priest who shares our hu - man pain, Christ in - ter - cedes.
 As you, O God, for - give our sin, may we for - give.

This text reflects both the struggle to deal with a deep personal hurt and a keen awareness of biblical language and content. The opening line of stanza two, for example, draws on the root meaning of the Greek word for sin, and the beginning of stanza three alludes to John 8:3-8.

TEXT: Ruth Duck, 1994

MUSIC: Jewish melody, 17th cent.; adapt. Meyer Lyon and Thomas Olivers, 1770

Text © 1996 The Pilgrim Press

LEONI

6.6.8.4.D

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INVITATION TO OFFERING

Margie Scribner-Greene

There are several options for giving: 1) Give at our website, <https://fccb.net/giving/>.

2) Mail checks to First Congregational Church, 2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225.

3) Use the Breeze app. Download from your app store, set up an account, and give!

4) Give by text. Text a dollar amount to (360) 205-1297, and set up your account.

Offering Music

"Connected"

One Accord

by Brian Tate © John Rich Music Press. Used under CCS License #12615.

***HYMN 23**

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

IN BABILONE

***BENEDICTION**

Sharon Benton

POSTLUDE

Judy Widrig

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Do you receive our Friday Announcements email? Contact office@fccb.net to sign up!

WORSHIP:

- **Sundays, 10:00 am**—Hybrid worship in person, on Facebook Live, and now on Zoom, our #BiggerBalcony.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

For details, see our Connection Calendar in the Friday email or contact office@fccb.net.

Monday

Board Meetings—2nd Mondays, **6:30 pm**

Church Council—4th Mondays, **7:00 pm**

Poetry Group—**7:00 pm**

Tuesday

Book Club—First Tuesday of the month, **9:30 am**

Wednesday

Meet Me in the Middle—**12:00 noon**

Glee Club—**3:00 pm**

Adult Forum—**7:00 pm**

Thursday

Evening Book Study—**5:00 pm**

Friday

Knitting Group: weekly, **10:00 am**

SPIRIT Group, 2nd & 4th Fridays, **6:15** welcome, **6:30 pm**

Game Night—3rd Fridays, **6:00-9:00 pm**

Saturday

Creative Connections—1st Saturdays at **10:00 am**

Sunday

Chancel Choir—**8:30 am**

Worship—**10:00 am**. Children's Church during worship

Youth Group—**11:30 am**

Going Deeper—after worship, hybrid

*To stay up to date, follow us on social media, subscribe to our Friday Email,
or check in with our Full Circle Blog, <https://www.fccb.net/blog/>.*

Open and Affirming (ONA): As an Open and Affirming congregation believing in a loving God, all people are welcome in this church without regard to gender, race, ethnicity, economic or social status, sexual orientation, or gender identity.

We Try To Use Language which will help people feel included in our worship. Since not everyone is comfortable with the same language, we invite you to amend the words of the service as we sing and pray if they do not adequately express your faith. We invite you to assist us in creating new expressions of our common faith and life together.

Technical Support: If you need help streaming our worship services or connecting in other ways, please let us know.

APPOINTMENTS WITH PASTORAL STAFF

Pastoral staff are available by appointment virtually, or in person with masks. Contact them by email or call the pastoral care line, 360-733-4255.

Sharon **sharon@fccb.net**

Davi: **davi@fccb.net**

You can also email our Office Manager
Cydne at **office@fccb.net**
and she'll pass your message on.

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH United Church of Christ

An Open & Affirming Congregation

2401 Cornwall Avenue, Bellingham, WA 98225

Church Office: 360-734-3720

24/7 Emergency Pastoral Care: 360-733-4255

office@fccb.net • www.fccb.net

Facebook: facebook.com/fccbucc

Twitter: @BhamUCC

Office Hours: 9:00 am-5:00 pm

LEAD PASTOR: Sharon Benton—

**PASTOR FOR YOUTH, YOUNG ADULTS,
& MISSION: Davi Weasley**

INTERIM MINISTERS OF FAITH FORMATION:

Ted & Susan Huffman

MINISTER OF MUSIC: Lucy Bledig

ORGANIST: Judy Widrig

ACCOUNTANT: Erin Kennedy

OFFICE MANAGER: Cydne Cochran

CUSTODIAN/MAINTENANCE: Kurt Aagard

WORSHIP MEDIA COORDINATOR:

Georgia Drost

MODERATOR: Mark Schofield

VICE MODERATOR: Scott Ward

PAST MODERATOR: Beth Tyne

CLERK: Janet Malley

TREASURER: Jen Sandoval

HISTORIAN: Stacy Miller

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