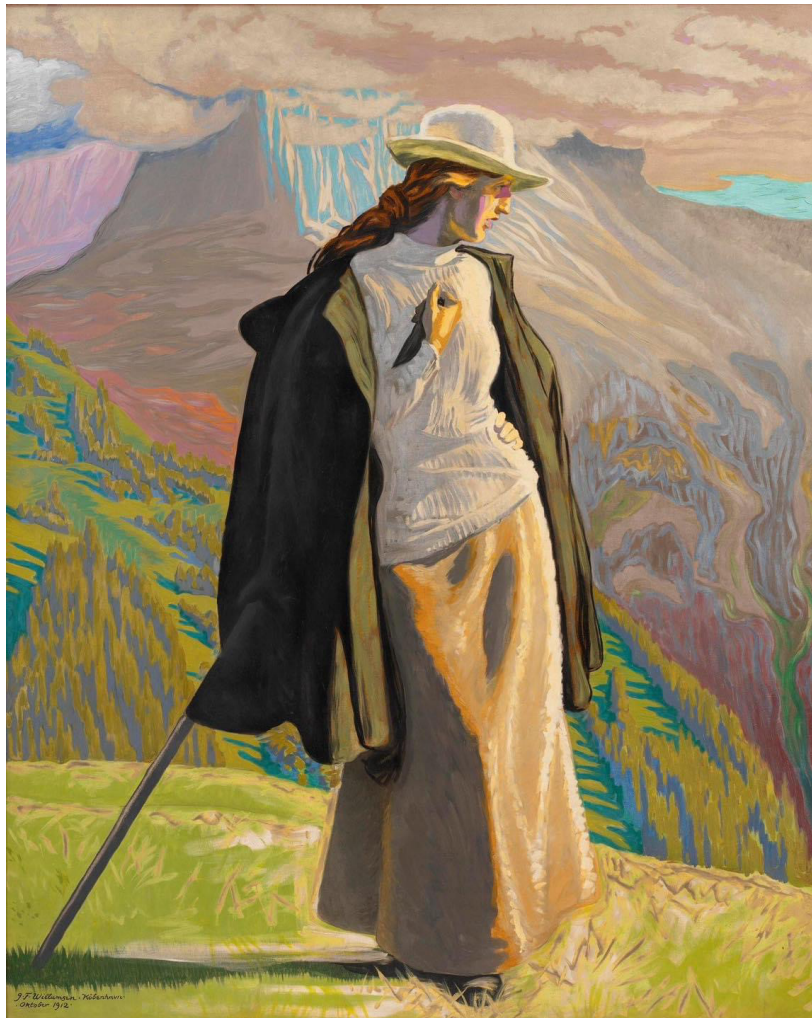


FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH  
*of Los Angeles*

*Journey Into Wholeness:  
The Twelve Steps as Sacred Art*

*Conscious Contact with God  
Eastertide 6*

*May 12th, 2024*



*"A Mountain Climber, 1922"  
By Jens Ferdinand Willumsen*

540 S. Commonwealth Avenue, Los Angeles, California 90020  
Telephone 213.385.1341 – [www.FCCLA.org](http://www.FCCLA.org)

## **The Gathering of the People**

*First Congregational Church of Los Angeles is a safe place for all people, and we celebrate our diversity of race, creed, age, ability, gender, religion, cultural background, sexual orientation, gender identities and expressions...We extend a warm welcome to all this morning and especially those who are with us for the first time. Your presence both enriches us and this time of celebration together ~*

### **Organ Prelude Concert**

**Dr. Christoph Bull, Organist-in-Residence**

Improvisation on SLANE and REGENT SQUARE

ST. COLUMBA (Daniel Burton)

Sólo Tú Eres Santo – QUERÉTARO (George Lachenauer)

Fantasy on SALZBURG (Dennis R. Johnson)

Chorale Prelude on KINGSFOLD (Michael Fontana) and Improvisation

Christ ist erstanden (Johann Kaspar Ferdinand Fischer) and Improvisation

Erschienen ist der herrliche Tag (Johann Gottfried Walther) and Improvisation

### **Chiming of the Hour**

#### **Welcome**

**Rev. Laura Vail Fregin**

#### **Words of Gathering**

**Rev. Fregin & Lauren Seely**

In the sunlight of spring,  
in the promise of warm days,  
and evenings that linger,  
in seasons of color and courage  
*The Holy One in our midst.*

In hills outlined against the rising sun,  
and the muted sounds of early morning walkers along  
the streets and the trails,  
*The Holy One is in our midst.*

In the faces of families and friends,  
the hurrying and the day dreaming  
*The Holy One is in our midst.*

In life touching other life, moments of kindness,  
sharing of joys, caring for others  
*The Holy One is in our midst.*

*Beginning today,  
in all our living, may we be freed  
to see things afresh,  
to be more fully alive,  
and have the courage to keep faith in  
the future of ourselves -  
and in all the people of this earth.*

May it be so.  
*May it be so for all of us!*

*Please stand in body or in spirit for our Hymn of Gathering*

**\*Hymn of Gathering**

*God, Composer and Conductor*

REGENT SQUARE

God, composer and conductor of earth's matchless symphony,  
Makes from silence glorious music, from discordance, harmony;  
Brings forth joy from deepest sorrow, ecstasy from agony.

God, the architect and artist of earth's colors, textures, forms,  
Gives new wonder to our vision, light in even darkest storms,  
Teaches that with understanding, faith redeems and love reforms.

God of science, healer, teacher, pushes out the boundaries  
Of capacity and knowledge, challenges and gently frees  
From the limits that restrain us, offers opportunities.

God, creative spirit in us, inspiration, force sublime,  
Leading us to new endeavor, you, our living paradigm,  
May we know your constant presence now, and to the end of time.  
[Jocelyn Marshall]

**\*Prayer of Awareness**

**Rev. Fregin**

Bless you, Wise and Holy One,  
for your down-to-earth vision  
of the best of what our life can be.  
*Bless you, Wise and Holy One,  
for your call to life in all its fullness...*

When we honor who we are as easily  
as we are enthralled by what others want us to be;  
when we stop pursuing happiness and let it embrace us;  
when we love not in the hope of getting  
but for the joy of giving;  
when love is not what-you-can-do-for-me  
but what-we-can-do-together;

when we choose our leaders not for their image  
but for their imagination,  
not for the politics they play  
but for the principles they live;  
when our economy thrives on our expressing who we are  
not on our spending what we have;

when the earth itself is our communion table;  
when we bite into theology's questions  
as readily as we swallow technology's answers;  
when we celebrate today as not just all we have but all we need.

*Then help us to bless you, Wise and Holy One,  
for calling us to life in all its fullness,  
not just hereafter, but here and now.  
Amen and Amen.* [adapt/nsdesdon]

**\*Introit**

“Here, O My God, I See Thee Face To Face”  
Cathedral Choir

PERCY WHITLOCK

**\*The Lord’s Prayer**

**Lauren Seely**

*Our [God], who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy Name,  
thy kindom 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 kindom,  
and the power, and the glory,  
forever. Amen.*

**\*Gloria Deo**

Glory be to God, and to the Christ and to the Holy Ghost,  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.  
World without end, Amen, Amen.

**The First Reading from the Gospel**

*from Matthew, chapter four*

**Rev. Chad Tanaka Pack**

**\*Passing of the Peace**

**Rev. Tanaka Pack**

When the way is convoluted  
and confusing,  
when the choice is not clear  
and uncertainty presses close,  
may there be those through whom  
God’s longing speaks,  
and, in speaking, shows us a way.  
[jrichardson]

This morning, may the Peace of God be with you.  
*And also with you!*

*You are invited to share this ancient greeting with a bow.*

**Please be seated**

## Children's Conversation

Claire Kelly

Following this conversation, children are invited to join us for our Sunday morning programming which is held outside near the playground. If you were unable to check your children in prior to the service, please accompany them to our Children's Area and check them in before returning to the service. Children must be picked up after worship before you head to Coffee Hour in the Courtyard.

## The Second Reading from the Gospel *from Luke, chapter five*

Rev. Fregin

When Jesus went out after this, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said, and Levi got up, left everything, and followed him. Levi gave a big reception at his house for Jesus, and there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others at dinner with them. The Pharisees and the religious scholars complained to Jesus' disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and 'wrong doers'?" Jesus answered them, "It's not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have come to call not the virtuous, but wrong doers to a new way."

## Prayers with the People

Rev. Fregin

### Invitation to Silence and Prayer

#### *Silence*

#### Prayer of our Hearts

O Blessed One,  
and Blessed Oneness,  
we long to find for ourselves the eagle's grace  
to ride, effortlessly,  
the thermals of life.

Often, it is distrust that keeps the wings of our hearts closed.  
We have been swept up once too often by  
promises unkept,  
by tragedies unexpected,  
by twists of fate unanticipated.

And so, in this Eastertide season,  
we are journeying with the Christ,  
Spirit-led,  
into the wilderness of apprehension  
to face our imagined demons of distrust,  
and then, to find the courage  
to lean once more into the winds of grace,  
and be uplifted by your never-ending presence.

This morning, may it be so.  
*May it be so for all of us, O God.*  
*Amen and Amen.*

## Meditation Anthem

"When We Plant Trees"  
Laude

DAVID CONLEY

**The Third Reading from the Gospel** *from Luke, chapter eight*

**Lauren Seely**

Now soon after this, Jesus journeyed through the towns and villages proclaiming the Good News of God's reign. With Jesus went the Twelve, as well as some women he had healed of unclean spirits and sicknesses; Mary of Magdala, from whom he had cast out seven unclean spirits; Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza; Suzanna; and many others who were contributing to the support of Jesus and the Twelve with their own funds.

These are the Gospels of Grace.

*Thanks be to God.*

**Sermon**

*Conscious Contact with God*

**Rev. Michael Lehman**

**Invitation to Generosity**

**Rev. Tanaka Pack**

*At First Church, we consider every pledge, tithe, offering and contribution a gift for the life of our community of faith. No matter how it's given, our gifts show gratitude. You are invited to visit our website at [fccla.org/give](http://fccla.org/give). Our hospitality team will also be at the exits when the service ends with baskets to collect gifts.*

**Offertory**

*"Ambe"*  
Cathedral Choir

ANDREW BALFOUR

*"Come in all people, there is good life here. Come in!"*

**\*Doxology**

From all that dwell below the skies,  
let the Creator's praise arise!  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Your name shall sound and praises soar  
till suns shall rise and set no more.  
Alleluia! Alleluia!  
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

[adapt/Isaac Watts, 1719]

**\*Prayer of Offering**

**Lauren Seely**

*Holy One,  
as we move into new experiences of life  
may we be open to the presence of the sacred  
among us and within.  
And may we sense the wonder and imagination  
in the sights and sounds of this precious day,  
as we give all that we have, and all that we are.*

May it be so.

*May it be so for all of us!*

*Amen and Amen.*

*Please be seated*

**Invitation to Communion & Words of Remembrance**

To gather at the table of the Christ is a countercultural act that challenges us to sort among our competing hungers, as it invites us to name the desire that lies beneath them, and beckons us to resist the urge to stuff ourselves not simply with food, but with whatever keeps us from acknowledging the emptiness within us.

The table of the Christ gives us a glimpse of Paradise: not the innocent paradise of Eden but rather a redeemed creation in which our wounds have given way to wisdom and we perceive beauty in the scars we carry.

Here we see with grown-up eyes that we are yet capable of wonder. These glimpses sustain us as we go into the world to offer others the feeding that we have found.

This morning, at this table, we are invited to taste and see the goodness of the God who calls us to the table, and meets us in every feast.

[jrichardson]

**Prayer of Blessing**

*At this table Holy One, make us one  
with each other  
and with all who share this feast.  
Unite us in faith,  
encourage us in hope,  
inspire us to love,  
that we may serve you,  
and your world.  
Amen and Amen.*

**Sharing of the Bread and the Cup**

At this table we celebrate all the diverse ways we have been created. Everyone is invited to share in this feast. This morning we will receive communion with gluten free wafers and grape juice. You are invited to come forward to receive these gifts and then light a candle to signify the prayers of your heart on this day. As we share this time, we remember that this is the bread of new life and the cup of hope, given in love for each of us.

**Life at First Church**

**Rev. Lehman**

**Words for the Journey**

**Rev. Lehman**

The God that travels with us,  
is never confined to this holy place and time.  
So go and travel with the God found  
in ordinary and surprising places.

You are wayfarers, following roads to the end of the earth,  
pilgrims on your way to the future.

*We are travelers on the road to freedom,  
a community of grace, with good news for all we meet.*

Travel lightly, travel together, learn as you go:  
you are **disciples**, the task is urgent, the journey is long.  
*We will take heart.*

When the way is uncertain,  
shadows are long and dangers threaten,  
*we will not be afraid.*  
*For we are in God and God is in us.*

So go in peace.  
And may the Holy God surprise you on the way,  
may the Christ be your company,  
and may the Spirit lift up your life.  
*Amen! May it be so!*

**Choral Response**

“Dismissal” from *No Ke Kanu Ana O Ke Kupapau*  
Cathedral Choir

THOMAS GOEDECKE

*“The grace of Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us forever, Amen.”*

**\*Hymn for the Journey**

*Wake Now My Senses*

SLANE

Wake, now my senses, and hear the earth call;  
Feel the deep power of being in all;  
Keep, with the web of creation your vow,  
Giving, receiving as love shows us how.

Wake, now my reason, reach out to the new,  
Join with each pilgrim who quests for the true;  
Honor the beauty and wisdom of time;  
Suffer your limit, and praise the sublime.

Wake, now compassion, give heed to the cry;  
Voices of suffering fill the wide sky;  
Take as your neighbor both stranger and friend,  
Praying and striving their hardship to end.



Wake, now my conscience, with justice your guide;  
Join with all people whose rights are denied;  
Take not for granted a privileged place;  
God's love embraces the whole human race.

-lyrics by Mikleson

*Please be seated for the Postlude*

**Postlude**

**Dr. Christoph Bull, Organist-in-Residence**

Short Fugue in G Major (ascribed to J.S. Bach)

### **Inside The Music**

"As we continue to celebrate AAPI Awareness Month, we sing a benediction from Hawaii. It is the final movement of Thomas Goedecke's larger Requiem. The robust writing and large organ texture creates a full sense of release into divine presence. All of this week's music centers on divine presence. Canadian and Cree composer Andrew Balfour's "Ambe" provides an invitation. So often it seems that people feel like they need to be asked into sacred spaces. With "Ambe" Balfour reminds us that life holds that divine space, remaining always open for us to "come in!" He references the eagle's flight as an inspiration for the music. You can particularly hear this reference as the soprano line begins to rise out of the rhythmic underpinnings in the other parts. As the counter rhythms stir and churn, they capture the essence of spirit as it flows in and around us. The invitation deepens with each iteration, calling us into the divine. David Conley's "When We Plant Trees" is the title piece on Laude's June 1st concert in celebration of the Cathedral Gardens that we hope you will all be in attendance for. It quotes the Greek proverb that encourages us to participate in efforts greater than ourselves. It says that "a society grows great when we plant trees whose shade we will never sit in." One can equally say that we come into divine presence when we live in a place of gratitude and giving. The music is straightforward and determined. David writes in a choral part song format, allowing the words to hang on carefully crafted melodies in each part. The individual lines move together centered on the words. The resulting richness of rhythm and harmony give the piece warmth and intention. Much like the famous Romantic part songs of Brahms, Vaughan Williams and others, "When We Plant Trees" lives in a world of promise and wonder. Perhaps one of life's most obvious and yet fleeting realities is that gratitude and giving lead to happiness. The Cathedral Gardens are an expression of this community's connection to divinity through the giving of our resources. When we can learn to live in a way that prioritizes gratitude and giving through the lens of compassion, not only do we change as individuals, but, as the proverb says, so does our whole society." ~ Dr. David Harris