CENTRAL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Service
December 24, 2021

PRELUDE *Prelude on 'Christmas Day'* Rebecca Nelson, Organ
[By Gustav Holst, arr. by James Mansfield]

GREETINGS

OPENING SONG *Wexford Carol* Chancel Choir
[arr. Joey Hoelscher Traditional Irish carol] Jessie Hernandez, Flute

OPENING PRAYER
Dear God, help me experience Christmas wonder on this holy evening. May I feel awe for the ultimate gift you've given humanity. Reach out to me so I can perceive your wonderful presence with me. Help me perceive the everyday miracles of your work around me during this most wonderful time of the year.

May the light of hope you offer help me transcend my worries and inspire me to trust you. Light broke through the darkness of night as angels announced Jesus Christ's birth on the first Christmas. As I look at Christmas lights tonight, may I remember the wonder of that Christmas, when shepherds received that good news from your messengers. Let every burning candle and twinkling light bulb in my home remind me that you are the light of the world. When I'm outside this evening, remind me to look up at the sky. Let the stars I see help me ponder the wondrous Star of Bethlehem that guided people to you. This Christmas Eve, may I see you in a new light because of wonder.

Let the people say Amen
People: Amen

All through the season of Advent as we prepared for Christmas, we've been exploring how we as a church can "make more room in the inn," becoming more hospitable to the needs of our community. On this Christmas Eve, we declare that The Inn is open for the business of compassion with room enough for all! The long-awaited Messiah has been born and on him the light shines. We have only to open the doors of our lives and say "welcome." Our Advent journey has led us to this moment when

the light shining through the closed doors of life becomes an open door to new possibilities, new relationships. What a poignant moment for us this year as the light–the hope, peace, joy and love–multiplies from one illuminated heart and hand to another.

[Choir]

Love comes to us at Christmas Love comes to heal our souls.
Love brings an invitation that our hearts might be made whole.
As we gather at the stable in the darkness, glad and grateful for the sacred in our midst,
for wonder and delight, Christ is born in us this night.

The Kim Family: Tonight we offer the Lights of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love to illumine the Door of Welcome.

And we add the brightest light of all… (the CHRIST candle is lit) the Light of the Newborn Jesus. It shines bright like the star that rose over Bethlehem. May this light also shine in our hearts, in our lives, and in our church. May this light awaken us to possibilities and lead us to greater hospitality. There IS room in this Inn, a House for the Holy.

[all sing]

Love comes to us at Christmas Love comes to heal our souls.
Love brings an invitation that our hearts might be made whole.
As we gather at the stable in the darkness, glad and grateful for the sacred in our midst,
for wonder and delight, Christ is born in us this night.

SHARING THE PEACE

Pastor Mark: The Peace of Christ be with you!
People: And also with you!

OPENING HYMN *Joy to the World* - អំណរដល់ពិភពលោក UMH 246 (English and Khmer)

1- Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare him room, and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing, and heaven, and heaven, and nature sing.

2-អំណរដល់លោក ព្រះយេស៊ូវកើត គួរមនុស្សប្រជុំគ្រប់គ្នា លើកបុត្រវិសុទ្ធ
អោយបានល្អធើត អោយសំលេងលឺខ្ទរខ្ទារ
អោយសំលេងលឺខ្ទរខ្ទារ អោយសំលេងលឺ -អោយ បានលឺ ខ្ទរខ្ទារ ។

3- No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.

4- ព្រះទ្រង់គ្រប់គ្រងលោកដោយឥទ្ធិរិទ្ធិ គ្រប់សាសន៍ក៏ឃើញព្រះគុណ
និងរស្មីនៃ ព្រះទ័យសុចរិត ទ្រង់ស្រឡាញ់ដោយស្រទន់
ទ្រង់ស្រឡាញ់ដោយស្រទន់ ទ្រង់ស្រឡាញ់ - ស្រឡាញ់ដោយភាពស្រទន់ ។

CHILDREN'S TIME Martha Shuemake

THE PROPHECY Isaiah 9:2-7 (NRSV)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined… For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

HYMN *O Come All Ye Faithful* (verses 1 – 6) UMH 234

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant, O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels.

Refrain:
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

True God of true God, Light from Light Eternal, lo, he shuns not the Virgin's womb;
Son of the Father, begotten, not created. (Refrain)

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation; O sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, all glory in the highest. (Refrain)

See how the shepherds, summoned to his cradle, leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;
we too will thither bend our joyful footsteps. (Refrain)

Child, for us sinners poor and in the manger, we would embrace thee with love and awe.
Who would not love thee, loving us so dearly? (Refrain)

Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning, Jesus, to thee be all glory given.
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing. (Refrain)

THE STORY Luke 2: 1-7 (NRSV)

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

ANTHEM *Angels' Carol* Chancel Choir
[John Rutter]

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *Make of My Heart a Stable*

[All Sing]

Make of my heart a stable, a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place for [hope] to live and grow.

In this moment we open the doors of our hearts to honesty before God about what we've done and left undone that created less hope in a hurting world. Let us breathe out this regret… [pause to breathe out] and breathe in the life-giving, for-giving Spirit of God… [pause to breathe in] and out again with the Peace of Christ… [another breath out].

[All Sing]

Make of my life a stable, a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place for [hope] to live and grow.

In this moment we open the doors of our lives to the call of the Spirit, inviting us to become more than we can ask or imagine. Let us breathe out our fear…[pause to breathe out] and breathe in the courage of the Spirit of God…[pause to breathe in] and out again, with the Peace of Christ…[another breath out].

[All Sing]

Make of our church a stable, a house for the holy,
a warm and sturdy place for [hope] to live and grow.

In this moment we open the doors of this church, filling it with the compassion of Christ for all those who are struggling. We remember and pray for…

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

> **Our God 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 trepasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever…Amen.**

THE STORY CONTINUES… Luke 2: 8-20 (NRSV)

After Jesus was born, the visitors began to show up to his birthplace, spurred by the message of the angels. But what we know is that in the presence of Jesus there are no visitors, we are all family with a place reserved for each one of us. And so, let us hear about those who gathered and join them in the presence of Jesus:

(Luke 2: 8-20) Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

HYMN *Hark the Herald Angels Sing* UMH 240

Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new-born King;
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful, all ye nations, rise, join the triumph of the skies;
with th'angelic host proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Christ, by highest heaven adored; Christ, the everlasting Lord;
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see; hail th' incarnate Deity,
pleased with us in flesh to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings, risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth.
Hark! the herald angels sing, "Glory to the new born King!"

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go right now to Bethlehem and see what’s happened. Let’s confirm what the Lord has revealed to us.” They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

HYMN *Away in a Manger* UMH 217

Away in a manger, no crib for a bed, the little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.
The stars in the sky looked down where he lay, the little Lord Jesus, asleep on the hay.

The cattle are lowing, the baby awakes, but little Lord Jesus, no crying he makes;
I love thee, Lord Jesus, look down from the sky and stay by my cradle till morning is nigh.

Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay close by me forever, and love me, I pray;
bless all the dear children in thy tender care, and fit us for heaven to live with thee there.

When they saw this, they reported what they had been told about this child. Everyone who heard it was amazed at what the shepherds told them. Mary committed these things to memory and considered them carefully. The shepherds returned home, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen. Everything happened just as they had been told.

SERMON This is not a Spectator Sport

SPECIAL MUSIC *Go Tell It On the Mountain* Ric Campero (Solo)

OFFERTORY *Infant Holy, Infant Lowly* Rebecca Nelson, Organ
Polish Carol, arr. by Dale Wood [UMH #229, Tune: *W Zlobie Lezy*]

MUSIC RESPONSE *O Holy Night* Chancel Choir
Jennifer Alcover, Soloist

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

CLOSING CAROL

Friends, this is the moment we've been waiting for. This is the moment we missed so much last year. Yes, we found ways to "pass the light" from one to another across the distance, knowing that nothing could extinguish the light of God in this world, knowing that Christ was with us and will always be. But oh, how good it is to be in this Holy House together. And for those who are watching online, we feel you, we know you are there, we are so glad that you join us in this moment with a candle lit at your own holy house. The Spirit makes it possible for us to be connected, as we found out last year. Let us sing this beloved song, Silent Night, that has been present through two centuries of ups and downs, steadfast in its message that the light still shines.

Silent Night UMH 239

Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright
round yon virgin mother and child. Holy infant, so tender and mild,
sleep in heavenly peace, sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night, shepherds quake at the sight;
glories stream from heaven afar, heavenly hosts sing Alleluia!
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

Silent night, holy night, Son of God, love's pure light;
radiant beams from thy holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth, Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.

Silent night, holy night, wondrous star, lend thy light;
with the angels let us sing, Alleluia to our King;
Christ the Savior is born, Christ the Savior is born!

I invite you to turn and face the doors of this church for the Benediction before extinguishing your light. As you turn, see the lighted faces of this gathered community and know that you belong in this family of love.

BENEDICTION

As you go out into the world this night… May God's Door of Welcome swing open in your heart and in your life. May Christ's humble first dwelling remind you of the plenty you already know. And may the Spirit lead you into more possibility and hospitality than you can imagine, making room in The Inn for all. May it be so for you. May it be so for us. May it be so for this church. Go in peace. Merry Christmas. Amen.

POSTLUDE *Nowell, Nowell* Rebecca Nelson, Organ
English Carol, arr. by Gilbert Martin [UMH #245, Tune: *The First Noel*]

POINSETTIAS

The following people have graciously donated poinsettias to decorate the church this Season.

Dave & Bennett	In Memory of our beloved father and grandfather Don Bennett
The Bonilla Family	In Memory of Linda Bonilla & Mark Laybourn
Ric & Julie Campero	In Memory of Edward & Bedie Mae Freiria In Memory of Francisco & Graciela Campero
Alan & Jane Cook	In Honor of our grandchildren Michael, Finnegan, Sawyer, Seamus, and Charlotte
Fred Cook	In Memory of Jane Cook's parents Mr. and Mrs. Peter Dyer In Memory of Fred &Aletha Cook.
Sylvia Corson & Family	In Memory of John Edmund Corson and John Peter Corson In Honor of John and Elaine Bradbury
Alexis Easton	In Memory of Mom and Dad and Aunt Helen
Julie Elam & Liz Jue	In Honor of Helen Underwood In Memory of Jack Underhill
Dianne & Alan England	In Memory of Robert & Victoria Hamilton In Honor of Aspen Alan England
Betty & Judson Gears	
Ginger Jacobs	In Memory of Stan Jacobs In Honor of Jamie Spaulding & Richard Larrouy
Julius & Faye Hastings	In Memory of Julius & Sylvia Hastings, Sr. In Memory of Edward & Beatrice Wooten, Sr. In Honor of our relatives and friends
Signe & Carter Holly	In Honor of our children and grandchildren
J. Marc Jantzen, Jr.	In Memory of Marc & Ruth Jantzen In Memory of Marilyn Asher
Ceniza C. Japzon	In Memory of my step-mom, Ines S. Camaso In Memory of my sister-in-law, Maglory G. Garibay In Honor of the birthday of my brother, December 18th, Ismael Leroy M. Camaso
Maureen Kroll	In Memory of my mother, Barbara Quinn In Memory of my husband, Normal Kroll
Patrick & Jennifer Langham	In Honor of our parents and our children
Shirley Law	In Honor of Michael & Arayzette Law
David & Carolyn Lawrence	In Memory of Roger and Joanna Wood In Memory of Harry and LaVerne Lawrence
Deborah Martinez	In Memory of Harry & Kay Gurnee

Margaret Miller	In Memory of Leland Miller In Memory of Dr. Terry Bawcom In Memory of Don Bouchet In Memory of Johnny Kalez
Sally Mills	In Memory of Mary Evans Spencer In Memory of Malcolm Spencer In Memory of Marian & Gene Mills
Mary Monroe	In Memory of my brother, Dr. Stanley DeFries
Irene Muster	In Memory of Raymond Muster In Memory of Bernice Silva In Memory of Walter & Gladys Storer
Michelle, Tim, Alissa & Adam Noke **Laura, Craig, Sara & Tyler Norris**	In Memory of John & Peter Corson In Honor of Grandma and Gramps, Elain & John Bradbury
Gayle & Ken Riley	In Memory of Murray and Erma Warren In Memory of Pat and Doris Lease In Memory of Fred and Joann Setness In Honor of the Central Methodist Nursery School, staff, and Board members
Teena Roland-Moreno	
Glenda Schubert	In Memory of Larry Schubert In Honor of Katie and Reggie Schubert
Martha Shuemake	In Honor of Dave Bennett (for our weekly phone calls)
Stan Steele, Denise & Lisa	In Memory of Karin Steele
Jamie Spaulding & Richard Larrouy	In Celebration of the Season and in remembrance of those we've lost
Carol Troutner	In Memory of Paul Troutner In Memory of Becky Troutner In Honor of Anthony Dahl, Ian and Cristian Salazar, and Elliot Almazan-Cezar (my great-grandsons)
The Underhill Family	In Memory of our sister Barbara
Ven & Sandra Uriarte	In Memory of Marino Duran, Sr. and Marcia Carr and Rocklyn Uriarte In Honor of Stephen P. Duran and Srean P. Alino
Elizabeth Van Eerde	In Memory of Drs. Katherine and John Van Eerde In Memory of Dr. & Mrs. Joseph Raddin
Linda Wingett	In Memory of Mel Wingett