

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP Sunday August 28, 2022



GATHERING

PRELUDE

My Faith Has Found a Resting Place
(Howard Helvey)

Monica Adams

GATHERING MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

Leader: Lord, give us strength to do your work for your people.

All: We want to do small acts of kindness to show your glory to all the people in the world.

Leader: Lord, help us to be humble when we do your mission and ministry.

All: We know that our good works have still many flaws and weaknesses.

Leader: Have mercy on us when we rely on your grace.

All: We can do all the works because of your grace and mercy. Thank you for using us as channels of your blessings to all. We praise your name! Amen.

*OPENING HYMN

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

UMH #89

CHILDREN'S MOMENT (11:00am)

Alan Cook

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED (11:00am)

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

(11:00am) Today we would like to invite everyone to write their name, email address, and cell number on the form in the red book located in the pew rack. Your name "introduces" you to others seated near you. Please read the names of those near you and greet them at the end of the service. The red book should be passed back to the center aisle seat.

***PASSING THE PEACE**

(Stand, bow or wave, with the word "Peace be with You!")

All Sing: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path (2x).*

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 2:4-13 (NRSV Pew Bible page 699)

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

***HYMN**

Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast

UMH #339

SCRIPTURE

Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 (NRSV Pew Bible pages 227-228)

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

SCRIPTURE

Luke 14:1, 7-14 (NRSV Pew Bible page 77)

Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.

All: Thanks be to God.

Pastor Sungho Lee

SERMON

"Friend, Move Up Higher!"

Pastor Sungho Lee

NEW MEMBER RECEPTION (11:00am)

Joan Bates

Levi Coon

QUESTION AND ANSWER TIME (8:30am)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

After a concern, we will say, "Lord, hear our prayers!"

After a joy, we will say, "Lord, we give thanks!"

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

PASTORAL PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor Sungho Lee

Our Father, 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 trespasses 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.

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

OFFERTORY

Prelude on Evan
(Gordon Young)

Monica Adams

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

UMH #94

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Chris Chan (8:30am)
June Sullivan (11:00am)

SENDING FORTH

*CLOSING HYMN	<i>We are Called</i>	TFWS #2172
*BENEDICTION		Pastor Sungho Lee
*POSTLUDE	<i>Prelude in D Major</i> (J.K. F. Fischer)	Monica Adams

* Indicates please stand as you are able.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Sungho Lee
Chris Chan, Worship Leader, 8:30am
June Sullivan, Worship Leader, 11:00am
Ric Campero, Director of Music
Monica Adams, Organist/Pianist
Alan Cook, Children's Moment
David Campero, Media
Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator
Rupert Cooper, Audio

SUNGHO IS TAKING VACATION

Sungho will be on vacation from August 30 through September 17. Our guest ministers will be Alexis Easton on September 4 and Dave Bennett on September 11. September 18 will be Autumn@Central with storyteller Joel ben Izzy.

PACIFIC BARBEQUE

On Tuesday, August 30 at 5:00pm, Central will be joining the Pacific Religious and Spiritual Life Department at UOP in hosting what we are calling an Interfaith BBQ to kick off the 2022-23 Pacific school year. The BBQ will take place in Central Park from 5:00pm to 6:30pm.

Volunteers are needed to make this BBQ a SUCCESS!

- Volunteers are needed to work in the kitchen from 3.00pm-5.00pm. If you volunteer you will be helping to make a fruit salad, green salad, and preparing other food.
- Volunteers are needed to bake cookies and bring them to the kitchen from 2.00pm-3.00pm
- Two people are needed to make sure the barbeque grills are working and will barbeque starting at 5.15pm.
- Several people are needed to set up 3.30pm-4.30pm.
- People are needed to help serve and act as Central hosts from 4.30-6.00pm
- And of course, we need volunteers to help clean up. 6.00pm-7.00pm

Please let Alan Cook know immediately what you can do to help by email at acook@cumcstockton.org or by signing up this Sunday. Invite a friend. All ages can help on this project. It will take a Central village to host this event.

AUTUMN@CENTRAL RETURNS TO THE CENTRAL CAMPUS ON SEPTEMBER 18

Renowned Jewish storyteller Joel ben Izzy, local jazz musicians and worship leader Alan Cook weave storytelling, jazz, and prayer together to create two unforgettable worship experiences for all ages. Jazz musicians will perform during the 8.30am and 11.00am services. Joel was our featured storyteller at the 2019 Autumn@Central.

This beautiful free outdoor art show on the Central campus will feature over 60 quilts. This year's show is in memory of JD McCain who was instrumental in helping to put this show on for the years. The Central campus will be transformed into beautiful outdoor art galleries. Each gallery will feature quilts made by members of our community. The beauty of the quilts hanging between trees and blowing gently in the breeze is a lovely sight. The quilts are on display from 9.30am-1.30pm.

"FRIENDS, MOVE UP HIGHER!" (Luke 14:1, 7-14)

Jesus is the only way to God.

I have received questions like these: If we are saved by Jesus alone, what happen to those who were born before Jesus or those who have never heard about Jesus?

I give them three choices.

1. All of them will be saved. A loving God would save all humans. Love wins. (Universalist)
2. I am sorry. They were not saved. The Bible says that only those who believe in Jesus will be saved. We were all dead anyway. Those who believed in Jesus should be saved. (Exclusivist)
3. Those who have heard about Jesus can make their choice. However, we cannot make people responsible for their choice if they have never heard about Jesus. A just God would figure out some ways to save those who have never heard about Jesus. (Pietistic Agnostics)

Universalists do not provide any ethical foundation. If everybody is saved, we do not worry about God's judgement on our action and life. This can lead to antinomianism. People can do whatever they want to do because God does not judge according to our actions. About 10 % of the population takes this position.

On the other hand, exclusivists sound like judgmental and non-caring people. They say, "All humans have been dead because the first Adam violated God's law. We should not complain about the death of those people who have been dead. We should give thanks for the lives saved." About 10 % of population takes this position.

The remaining 80% take one of the forms of the Pietistic Agnostics. They believe that God will provide some form of salvation to those who did not hear about Jesus. That is fair. However, those who heard about Jesus should believe in Jesus to be saved. You had a chance to choose life. However, people have different opinions about the ways how God saves people.

God would save humble people!

Here is one clue. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus gives us an illustration. One Sabbath, when Jesus noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

This is a teaching about humility. When we are humble God will lift us up! However, this is not the end.

God would save generous people!

Jesus takes one more step. Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

When we practice mercy without expecting reward we will be saved. In these two illustrations, the key words are humility and mercy. Jesus first, Others second, You the last will give you JOY! JOY of Salvation!

Actually God is humble enough to come to us in human form, and merciful enough to die on the Cross to save us. God acted out what God expected from us.

Faith in Jesus means "Acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God." (Micah 6:8)

Before Jesus came to us in flesh, we had clear guideline for salvation in Micah 6:8. Jesus summarized it with two commandments: "Love God and love your neighbor." When we love God, we act justly. When we love our neighbors, we practice mercy. All these are expressed in walking humbly with God. In other words, when we help others, we do not boast or show off. Micah is saying "Love your God and love your neighbor in humility."

Anybody who confesses that they need God's grace and mercy would be saved.

Let us go back to the original question. Those who were born before Jesus or who never heard about Jesus would be saved when they confess that they need God's grace and mercy. On the other hand, those who practice all kinds of religious practices and feel that they earned their salvation by their works would not be saved. If someone says, "I am fine, I do not need God!" that is the one that God does not save.

Jeremiah 2:4-13 describes these people. "They followed worthless idols and became worthless themselves. They did not ask, 'Where is the Lord, who brought us up out of Egypt and led us through the barren wilderness, through a land of deserts and ravines, a land of drought and utter darkness, a land where no one travels, and no one lives?'"

Jeremiah criticizes those people who do not give credit to God for what they have enjoyed in life.

God says, "Therefore I bring charges against you again, and I will bring charges against your children's children." God says, "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."

Do we still need good works?

Do not get me wrong. We still support good works. Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16 says, "Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."

Even though salvation depends on God's mercy and grace, we need to keep our communities with our works. Works are needed to keep our communities. God's mercy is given for our salvation. Works and Grace have two distinctive functions for two different goals.

We need ethical behaviors to maintain our communities.

The basic community is our family in many forms. The Bible supports families. Marriage is the starting point of a family. That is why the Bible treats marriage seriously. It is a covenantal relationship between two consenting adults. The Bible says, "Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."

We should keep such covenantal relationship with God also. The Bible says, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have." Money is not our helper. Money comes and goes to live with other money lovers. However, God lovers would say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

Leaders of our small groups and our church would be role models in this covenantal relationship with God. They speak the word of God to us and prove their leadership through the outcome of their way of life. We all can imitate their faith.

What is the difference between Christianity and other religions then?

If we support good works and humility and mercy saves us, why do we need Jesus? What is the difference between Christianity and other religions? I am glad that you asked this question. When someone says that "My good works are not good enough to save me!" there is no difference between Christianity and other religions. If someone says, "I have earned my salvation through my good works" then we have a clear difference.

Some religions claim that their good works save them. We declare that all our good works will help our communities but will not save us. Only Jesus saves us and anybody who requests help from God.

God sent his only begotten Son to save all who believe in him!

The Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." That means Jesus can save those who asked for help even before Jesus came to us in flesh. The salvific effect of the blood of Jesus on the Cross can save all those who were born before Jesus and all those who have never heard about Jesus. When they simply ask God's mercy and grace, acknowledging their helplessness, they will be saved by the blood of Jesus, which covers all time and space.

Jesus Is not limited by our dimensions.

We live in this third dimension within the time limits. God is not limited by our dimensions and times. God is the creator of all the dimensions and even times. Some people ask, "What did God do before God created the universe?" God was creating times and dimensions. That is why the salvific effect of the Cross can cross over time and dimensions.

The Bible encourages us, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name. And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

In summary, do good works and do not boast about them. Always praise God who accepts our "good" works even though they are not good. Parents always praise the performance of their children because they love their children. Always give credit to God and praise God who saves us from the power of sin and death. Embrace all the religions that admit God's grace. Reject all the others who do not want God's grace and claim the goodness of their works. God is the one who helps us to keep our hope, peace, joy, and love. Amen.