

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP
Communion Sunday
Sunday, March 5, 2023



GATHERING

PRELUDE	<i>Kyrie</i> [Thomas Keesecker]	Monica Adams
GATHERING MOMENT		Laura Dinges
INTROIT	<i>The God of Abraham</i>	Chancel Choir
*CALL TO WORSHIP		Laura Dinges
	Leader: Truly I tell you that no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.	
	All: How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?	
	Leader: I tell you that no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.	
	All: How can these things be?	
	Leader: For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.	
	All: Indeed, God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.	
*OPENING HYMN	<i>This Is a Day of New Beginnings (vs 1, 4, 5)</i>	UMH #383
CHILDREN'S MOMENT		Martha Shuemake
PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED		
MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT		Laura Dinges
RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS		Laura Dinges

***PASSING THE PEACE** Laura Dinges

(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).*

ANTHEM

I Lift Up Mine Eyes
[Allen Pote]

Chancel Choir
Barbara Maters, Flute
Alelih Galvadores, Oboe

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE

Genesis 12:1-4 (Pew Bible NRVs, page 10)

Laura Dinges

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

All: Thanks be to God.

***HYMN**

Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast

UMH #339

SCRIPTURE

John 3:1-17 (Pew Bible NRSV, pages 93-94)

Laura Dinges

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

All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON

"Every Believer Will Have Eternal Life"

Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Laura Dinges

After a concern, the worship leader will say "Let us pray to the Lord," and the congregation will reply,

"Lord, hear our prayer!"

After a joy, the worship leader will say "Let us pray to the Lord," and the congregation will reply, **"Lord, we give thanks!"**

PASTORAL PRAYER

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS

Laura Dinges

OFFERTORY

My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less
[Aaron David Miller]

Monica Adams

***DOXOLOGY**

Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow

UMH #95

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Laura Dinges

COMMUNION

UMH #17-18

Laura Dinges

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: It is right and a good and joyful thing...And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Sing: *Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.*

Leader: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ...And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Sing: *Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.*

Leader: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here...Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and for ever.

Sing: *Amen, amen, amen.*

LORD'S PRAYER

Rev. 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.

COMMUNION HYMNS

*I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry
You Satisfy the Hungry Heart
Hear, O My Lord, I See Thee*

TFWS #2051

UMH #629

UMH #623

COMMUNION REFLECTION

Rev. Sungho Lee

SENDING FORTH

*CLOSING HYMN

If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee

UMH #142

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Sungho Lee

*POSTLUDE

Magnificat quinti toni v. 4
[Pachelbel]

Monica Adams

FLOWERS

The flowers on the altar are given by Ceniza Japzon. "Thanking God for another year full of blessings as I celebrate my birthday with my grandkids, Isaiah, March 14 and Hazel, March 16."

* Indicates please stand as you are able.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee
Laura Dinges, Worship Leader
Martha Shuemake, Children's Moment
Ric Campero, Choir Director
Monica Adams, Organist/Pianist
David Campero, Livestream
Mark Wharff, Media
Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator
Rupert Cooper, Audio

Instrumentalists today were made possible by the generous donations to the Putnam Music Enrichment Fund

SERMON IN A NUTSHELL: "EVERY BELIEVER WILL HAVE ETERNAL LIFE!"

Heaven and Hell

Someone came to me and said, "I am so troubled by the notion that anybody who does not believe in Jesus would go to hell!" I asked her, "What do you have in your mind when you think about hell?" She replied, "Hell is a place where people are suffering eternally with fire and brimstone!" Then no wonder she had trouble with the notion.

Biblically speaking, "Heaven" is "a life with God." "Hell" is "a life without God." Heaven and Hell have nothing to do with a place where we go after life. We can live in heaven or hell while we are living in physical bodies. In the Bible, heaven and Kingdom of God can be used interchangeably.

A Pharisee named Nicodemus Case

Let us see Nicodemus Case. He was a leader of the Jews. He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person."

First, he came to see Jesus at night. Why? He was afraid of being caught by others when he visited Jesus. He did not want to ruin his reputation as a good Pharisee, a good teacher of the Bible. His visit could be interpreted as an inappropriate action. Jesus was nobody. He was somebody. He was mindful of legal and moral actions all the time.

Secondly, he judged Jesus according to the signs that Jesus did. Jesus healed the sick and performed miracles. Those are the signs that Jews were seeking as marks of God's presence. Judaism in the First Century is based on the moral actions of human beings and miracles of God. In other words, according to Judaism, we go to heaven when we live morally, keeping the laws. By the way, many other religions teach the same thing. The trouble is that nobody keeps all the laws, and nobody can go to heaven.

However, Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Our going into heaven, having an intimate personal relationship with God, has nothing to do with our moral behaviors or keeping laws. We can have intimate personal relationship with God when we are born in God's family.

My children have an intimate personal relationship with me when they were born. I became their father when they were born. They did nothing, no action, moral or immoral. They were just born. Likewise, we become children of God by being born from above!

We can go to heaven by being born from above.

Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

That is analogy! You should know better. Do not take an analogy literally. Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit." In other words, we have to repent our sins and be baptized with water as a sign of our repentance. Then, we need to follow the Spirit in our daily lives to live as children of God.

We change the direction of our life (Repentance) when we are baptized. We have run after worldly things before. Now we worship God. We have valued money, power, fame, and pleasure in the world before. Now we value our relationship with God more than anything else. That is the starting point, not the final line. We

seek the relationship with God first. God will add money, power, fame, and pleasure in the world if those things are necessary to do God's works in the world.

Life without God (life in hell).

Jesus said, "What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit." Those who want to get worldly things have proven that they belong to this world. Those who want to have intimate relationship with God have demonstrated that they belong to heaven. Our desire to be with God shows that we are children of God. Our desire to be recognized and praised by the world proves that we are children of the world. Then we will continue living in this world as the children of the world. We continue to live without intimate relationship with God. In biblical terms, we live in hell.

Recently the *New York Times* ran an article about the suicide rate of teenagers and the amount of time that they use their smart phones. It shows meaningful correlations between them. Teenagers are hungry to be recognized and praised by others, they are looking for a million views, and failed. They are depressed and decide to kill themselves. They live in hell.

The first step to get out of hell is to believe in Jesus as the Savior and Lord.

Jesus was born from a virgin Mary. That means Jesus did not belong to any tribe or a nation. When we have a father, we have a last name, which gives us a place in a tribe or a nation. Jesus transcended all those boundaries by being born from a virgin without a human father. It is not just a miracle, but a divine message that God is telling us: We need to transcend our ethnic boundaries. We need to be born above. We need to overcome those desires to be recognized and praised by belonging to a certain group.

Jesus said to Nicodemus. "Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So, it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

The Spirit does not discriminate people. It blows over all the nations and races. We can see many people who want to have an intimate relationship with God from all over the world. Our online service is watched by people in Asia, Africa, and Europe as well as North and South America. Jesus was not just a Messiah for the Jewish people but a savior and Lord for all peoples in the world.

Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?" Jesus said, "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

Now Let us Talk About Heavenly Things.

Nicodemus could not understand "earthly things." He still discriminated against other people according to their social status, races, and religions. Or social media postings if he lives today. He was not ready to hear the "heavenly things" like life after death and resurrection and eternal life. He would call it not relevant!

However, we do not discriminate against people because of their race, religions, sex, age, social status, or sexual orientation. We are ready to hear those heavenly things. Those serious topics are relevant to us. We are ready to talk about and hear about life after death, resurrection, and eternal life.

Jesus was born in an unexpected way and Jesus died in an unexpected way. For a Jewish Messiah, he could not die on the Cross. A Jewish Messiah would be a political hero for the Jewish people, like King David.

Jewish people believed that a Messiah like King David would come and restore their glorious good old days. "Make our nation great again!" was their slogan! Then Jesus performed miracles and met their great expectations. They wanted to have the right and left side of the throne of a king! However, that is not the mission of Jesus. "My kingdom does not belong here on earth!" Jesus said that he needed to be killed and lifted up on a tree like the serpent in the wilderness that Moses lifted up!

What happened in the wilderness?

In the wilderness, people worshipped idols. They did not worship God. God sent serpents who bit the Israelites. God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole. If people looked at the bronze serpent on a tree, they would live. It was a test to see if people would accept God's invitation and believe in God. It was a simple action: Just turn your head and look at the bronze serpent on the pole! Those who believe in God's words turned their head and were healed. Those who laughed at the invitation, they did not turn around their head and died in the wilderness.

Jesus said now that when people accepted him as the Savior and Lord, they would live. If not, they would continually live without God in their lives. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." Then Jesus added, "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him."

God did not send people to hell. (Translation: God did not unfriend us in Facebook.) God wanted to save people from hell. (Translation: God wants to be a friend with us in Facebook.) God sent his only son to show that God wanted to have an intimate personal relationship with us. Do you want such relationship with God? It is so simple. We can just say that we accept Jesus as our savior and Lord! (Translation: Just press Accept.) However, not everybody can make that simple confession. Instead, they raise so many questions and refuse to make that simple confession. (Translation: Are you still looking at God's postings to see if God is worthy to be your friend?)

Abrahams's Case.

Let see, Abraham's case. He was not a rich man or an educated man. He was a wandering Aramean. Now the Lord said to Abram (before his name is changed into Abraham, he was Abram), "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

We do not hear any question from Abraham? Why now? Why do I have to leave my country and kindred and my father's house? What do you mean a great nation? How can I be a blessing? No questions asked.

Abram went, as the Lord had told him.

Apostle Paul said in Romans 4:1-5, 13-17 that "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Abraham just believed in God and followed God's commandments. "For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist." Abram means an exalted father. He wanted his name to be exalted. Abraham means a father of multitude. He now cared for many children. We know many wealthy, powerful, and famous people who have eternally lonely life.

Abraham shows us an example of faith. He accepted God's offer and believed in God. Action followed.

Believe in Jesus and have eternal life!

God loves us and sent Jesus as our savior. He died on the Cross to forgive all our sins. Whatever we have done in our lives, when we confess our sins and ask God's forgiveness, God forgives us. We can start a new life in Jesus. Then we are free from the power of sin and death. We live in heaven now and after life. In this way, we live eternally with God in heaven. Accept Jesus as your savior and Lord today! May God bless you and give you eternal life now! Amen.



FAMILY PROMISE GIVING CLUB

The Family Promise Giving Club will start the month of March and will go until December. Participants pledge to give a certain amount every month for the next 10 months.

\$1 per month Club
\$20 per month Club

\$5 per month Club
\$30 per month Club

\$10 per month Club
\$? per month Club (you pick the amount!)

ALL ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE! ADULTS, YOUTH, CHILDREN!

If you would like to be a part of the Family Promise Giving Club, please sign-up on Sunday before or after Church.

CARE NETWORK DIRECTORY

As many of you know, our church does not have a printed church directory. However, we want to care for our church members. We want to call when people are sick. We want to be connected to each other. So, for those who want to be in this care network, please sign your name and we will publish a care network directory and revise it every year. We will have a sign-up sheet for the month of March and publish a yearly directory.

SHARE THE BREAD AND CUP! AN INVITATION AND OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE!

Central is in need of an alternate Communion steward (or two). This person would take on Communion duties when the steward is out sick or otherwise unable to meet her ministerial commitment. The job involves purchasing bread and juice, preparing them for individual consumption, setting them out for both services, and cleaning up afterward. Rest assured; detailed instructions are available! Even if you are willing to do the job for ONE service, please contact Chris Chan at (209) 462-9663 (landline – no texts!) or at cc.luz4light@gmail.com. Thank you for your prayerful consideration of this request!

2023 LENTEN BIBLE CHALLENGE THE CHALLENGE HAS BEGUN! BUT YOU CAN STILL SIGN UP!

We want to spend this Lenten journey with **Paul's Letter to Romans** (16 chapters) and **Gospel according to Luke** (24 chapters). We will read a total of 40 chapters, one each day during Lent. You will also be given 3 questions each day to meditate on. You are invited to write your thoughts on the given chapter.

We will meet both in person and online. If you would like to participate, please email Pastor Lee at slee@cumcstockton.org or sign-up after church at the sign-up table.

WHAT'S NEXT IN CENTRAL'S ADULT CLASS?

Some of you have noticed (or read) that church attendance is down everywhere after the pandemic shutdown. Truth is, there's been a long, slow decline in church attendance for many years. **Many are concerned that, while they remain committed Christians, their children, and often friends, have no such commitment. Why is this?**

Brian McClaren, raised as an evangelical and later a local pastor, addressed this last year in a book entitled, *Do I Stay Christian?: A Guide for the Doubters, the Disappointed, and the Disillusioned*. In this, McClaren lists, describes and responds to questions and stumbling blocks many in what Bishop John Spong called "The Church Alumni Society" struggle with. Those who wish to read the book may do so, but we'll use a summary document prepared by United Methodist pastor John Sublett. In our four-week class, **we'll consider with four topics:**

- **Do I stay Christian? – No** (Reasons people leave). (Mar 5)
- **Do I stay Christian? – Yes** (Reasons others think it's important to stay) (Mar 12)
- **"Why Church is Important"**: Heartfelt note from a grandfather to his granddaughter as she prepares for her Roman Catholic Confirmation. (Mar 19)
- **Discussion**: Sharing how we have walked this path. (Mar 26)

When: Sunday mornings at 9:45 in Knoles Room 6

SUNDAY AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP

Our next read is 'Solito' by Javier Zamora.

A young poet tells the inspiring story of his migration from El Salvador to the United States at the age of nine in this gripping memoir of bravery, hope and finding family.

Our next meeting date will be on March 12th at 12:30 in the Fellowship Hall.