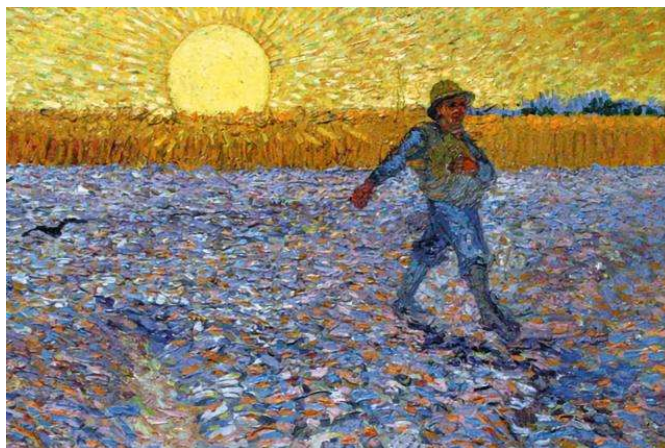


Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP
7TH Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday, July 16, 2023



GATHERING

PRELUDE

Sonata No. 1 in E flat, (K. 61)
[by W. A. Mozart (1756-1791)]

Erin Wolf (8:30am)
Rebecca Nelson (11:00am)

GATHERING MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

*SUNG CALL TO WORSHIP

Invocation
By Alexis Easton

Chris Chan (8:30am)
Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

Vocals

We come to-gether ground-ed in the love of God, We come to-gether to

Vox.

claim the Spir - it's power.. May we see Christ's face in one an - oth - er,

Vox.

May we be strength - ened for God's pur - pose in this hour.

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Carol Willson

*OPENING HYMN

O Word of God Incarnate

UMH #598

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

***PASSING THE PEACE** Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)
(Stand, bow or wave, with the word "Peace be with You!")
All Sing: *And God will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God's hand.*

SPECIAL MUSIC *Come thou Fount of Every Blessing* Ric Campero, Tenor
[arr. by Mark Hayes] Rebecca Nelson, Piano

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE Genesis 25:19-34 (Pew Bible NRSV, pages 21-22) Chris Chan (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)
All: Thanks be to God.

***HYMN** *Open My Eyes That I May See* UMH #454

SCRIPTURE Matthew 13:1-23 (Pew Bible NRSV, pages 13-14) Chris Chan (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)
All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON "God Blesses Us" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)
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 & 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.

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

OFFERTORY Erin Wolf (8:30am)
Prayer Rebecca Nelson (11:00am)
[by R. Vierne (1878-1918)]

***DOXOLOGY** *Praise God, From Whom all Blessings Flow* UMH #94
***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below: Alleluia! Alleluia!
Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power up lifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Chris Chan (8:30am), Mary Juarez Dalton (11:00am)

SENDING FORTH

*BENEDICTION

Rev. Sungho Lee

*RESPONSE

Shalom to You

UMH #666

***Shalom to you now, shalom, my friends.
May God's full mercies bless you, my friends.
In all your living and through your loving,
Christ be your shalom, Christ be your shalom.***

*POSTLUDE

Chaconne

Erin Wolf (8:30am)

Rebecca Nelson (11:00am)

[by Louis Couperin (c. 1626-1661)]

***The flowers on the altar are given by Van Ha To-Cowell in memory and celebration of her late husband,
Dana Cowell's 68th birthday on July 16.***

* Indicates please stand as you are able.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee

Chris Chan, 8:30am Worship Leader

Mary Juarez Dalton, 11:00am Worship Leader

Carol Willson, Children's Moment

Ric Campero, Choir Director

Erin Wolf, 8:30am Pianist

Rebecca Nelson, 11:00am Organist/Pianist

David Campero, Livestream

Mark Wharff & Steven Adams, Media

Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator

Rupert Cooper, Audio

SERMON IN A NUTSHELL: "GOD BLESS US!"

As a father, I yearn to bestow upon my offspring all that I possess.

The Almighty, our heavenly Father, seeks to shower us with benevolence and favor. He has granted us existence, an existence abundant and everlasting. It is intended for us to relish the bountiful blessings bestowed by God. Yet, why do some among us fail to revel in such blessings? The Scriptures recount two tales that compel us to ponder the reasons behind this deprivation.

We may think that we do not need God's blessings, and we do not ask them.

Consider the narrative of Esau and Jacob. Esau, a proficient huntsman, a man of the wilderness, whereas Jacob, a meek soul, preferred the solace of tents. Isaac held affection for Esau due to his prowess in the hunt, while Rebekah's heart inclined toward Jacob. Esau, self-reliant and adroit, possessed the skills to procure sustenance without depending on God or others. He exuded confidence and proficiency. On the

contrary, Jacob was timid, unfamiliar with the ways of the hunt. He placed his reliance upon his mother's guardianship and provision, lacking independence.

One day, as Jacob simmered a savory stew, Esau returned famished from his toil in the fields. He beseeched Jacob, "Please, let me partake of that reddish concoction, for my hunger is insatiable!" And thus, he earned the epithet Edom. Jacob seized this opportune moment and proposed, "Sell me your birthright before you partake." Esau, consumed by his immediate pangs, retorted, "Behold, I am at death's door. What use is a birthright to me?" Jacob persisted, demanding an oath before finalizing the transaction. And so, Esau swore away his birthright to Jacob, who, in turn, furnished him with bread and lentil stew. Having sated his hunger, Esau rose and departed, displaying disdain for his rightful heritage.

Esau deemed his birthright and God's blessings unnecessary, his conviction resolute. Jacob, however, recognized his inability to endure without the benevolence of God. He astutely exploited his brother's hunger and impetuosity to procure his desired outcome. Jacob was akin to one who grasps at another's heel, seizing every opportunity presented.

Should we find ourselves convinced that we can forgo the blessings of the Divine, God shall honor our choice. In contrast, Satan and the forces of evil hold no regard for our volition and determinations. When one voices their vehement refusal, a rapist disregards their plea and perpetrates an abhorrent act. Yet, a gentle soul would never employ coercion to engage in intimate communion with their beloved; instead, they honor their partner's decision and seek consent. Such is the nature of God. Satan, in his malevolence, endeavors to dismantle our lives and rob us of our joy. This underscores the utmost significance of seeking God's blessings.

We need to ask God to come into our lives.

When we beseech the Holy Spirit to enter our lives, it shall descend and guide us on our journey. Jesus, too, shall redeem us solely upon our earnest plea for Him to assume the mantle of our Lord and Savior. God, the epitome of patience, awaits our acceptance of Him as our heavenly Father.

In the realm of personal autonomy, when we proclaim, "Withdraw from my presence," we shall indeed be granted solitude.

As a parent, my deepest intention rests upon the restoration and prosperity of my son's well-being. Yet, when I extend my hand to aid him, he rebuffs me with the words, "Leave me alone." In such moments, my actions become futile, for he insists on his solitude. This scenario serves as a poignant reminder of God's yearning and affection to dwell with us, to assist us, and to bestow blessings upon us.

When we implore God to depart from our lives, desiring God's absence, God shall honor our request. The Almighty does not resemble a swindler employing manipulative tactics, nor does God embody the essence of a thief brandishing a firearm. Instead, God exhibits unwavering patience, awaiting our invitation. "God, please enter my life and offer your guidance!"

I have encountered numerous individuals consumed by anger, bellowing to the heavens, "Leave me alone!" In such instances, I am compelled to pose a question to them: "If indeed there is no God, would all the burdens of life miraculously dissipate? In the absence of God and the church that seemingly troubles you incessantly, do you truly believe that all the adversities of existence would suddenly vanish, leaving you with an idyllic existence? Are God and the teachings of the church solely responsible for your unhappiness and tribulations?"

Admittedly, such an approach fails to embody the qualities of a compassionate shepherd. Instead, it is essential that I lend an ear, uttering, "I comprehend. I empathize. I apologize. You shall remain in my

prayers." However, on occasion, my fervor overwhelms me, leading me to express my unfiltered thoughts. Truly, I am in dire need of maturation and growth.

A parable of a Sower.

Dissimilar to my own demeanor, Jesus exuded humility and gentleness. He imparted wisdom unto His disciples through a parable, proclaiming, "Attend and listen! A Sower ventured forth to scatter seeds. As he sowed, some seeds fell upon the pathway, and the birds swiftly swooped down, devouring them. Other seeds landed upon rocky ground, where the soil was scant, and they sprouted rapidly, lacking depth in their roots. Yet, when the sun rose high, scorching rays withered them away, as their roots failed to establish firmness. Certain seeds fell amidst thorns, and as they grew, the thorns entwined them, choking their growth. Yet, other seeds descended upon fertile soil, producing abundant crops—one hundred, sixty, or thirtyfold. Let those with ears perceive and grasp the meaning!"

Jesus elucidated the parable's significance.

While Jesus imparted teachings through parables, He did not abandon His disciples to decipher the intended message on their own. He graciously unveiled the meanings behind His parables. Responding to His disciples' inquiry, He expounded, "When an individual encounters the word of the kingdom but fails to comprehend it, the evil one swoops in, snatching away the seeds planted within their heart. This represents the seeds sown upon the pathway. As for the seeds on rocky ground, they symbolize those who joyfully receive the word upon hearing it, yet lacking depth and endurance, they quickly falter when trouble or persecution arises due to the word. The seeds among thorns represent those who hear the word, but the worries and temptations of the present age, as well as the allure of material wealth, stifle its growth, resulting in fruitless endeavors. Conversely, the seeds sown on fertile soil yield abundant produce, signifying those who attentively receive and comprehend the word, bearing fruit in varying degrees—some yielding a hundredfold, others sixty, and yet others thirty."

Now, let us contemplate how we can apply this parable to our lives.

The question at hand revolves around how we may glean benefits from this parable. As I reflect upon my own shortcomings in providing pastoral care, I repent for my unbecoming responses. Allow me to present a step-by-step application of this parable to address our concern: how to access and embrace the multitude of blessings prepared and bestowed upon us by God.

Firstly, foster a fervent desire to receive God's blessings. Seek them earnestly and ardently. Extend an invitation to the Holy Spirit, welcoming her into your life, cherishing her counsel as invaluable treasures.

Secondly, attend the Sunday worship services, small group Bible studies, and pray always.

Then take actions in faith, adhering to His desires while refraining from that which God disapproves. But how can one discern God's will? Here are two guiding principles:

"And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." (Micah 6:8)

"Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." (1 Thessalonians 5:16)

When we pray continually and invite God to come into our lives, we can enjoy all those blessings.

May the blessings of God eternally rest upon you! Amen.



HELP US CREATE A NEW CHURCH MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORY

A church directory is a foundation stone for connecting with each other and organizing our many activities and outreach efforts. It is time to create a new one that is easily accessible online, easily updated, and of course secure to maintain confidentiality.

EVERYONE needs to answer our questionnaire that is easy, takes 5 minutes to complete, and provides us with accurate and current contact information for you and your family. PLEASE ANSWER THE QUESTIONNAIRE even if you are a long-time member since we are updating our records and must verify that every record is up to date.

You can pick up a paper version of the questionnaire from the Church office or from a table set up outside the Sanctuary during Sunday services. Thank you for helping to build this important resource! Contact person: Dick Edelstein (209) 351-5857.

A SUMMER MISSION PROJECT

Central has been invited to participate in Pacific's Day of Service scheduled for August 26 during new student orientation. We have been asked to provide the items for care packages for the unhoused women of our community. From Sunday, July 16 through August 20 you are invited to shop for the following items:

- Wet wipes
- Toothbrushes and toothpaste
- Socks
- Single serving snacks
- Feminine hygiene products
- Bandages
- Comb/brush
- Pocket Packs facial tissues
- Lip balm
- Nail clippers
- Small bottles of Shampoo

Bring your donations on Sundays and place them in the red tubs located in the Knoles Building and in the Atrium. On August 26 a group of incoming Pacific students will put them together. Please consider inviting your friends and co-workers to join you in donating. If you are unable to shop and would like to donate money to help cover the cost of the purchase, be sure to include the words Day of Service on the memo line of your check.

SUMMER BIBLE STUDY

Join Pastor Lee's Summer Bible Study Small Group during July and August on Sundays in the Fellowship Hall following the 11:00am worship service (except for the Sundays when Book Club meets, and Annual Conference happens). The study is open to everyone. Come to the Fellowship Hall and learn about the leadership of Samuel, King Saul, and King David in the Bible.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING CLASS

First Wednesday of August at 6pm via Zoom. Open to anyone that would like to attend. If you are a Committee Chair and have not attended this is your last chance. As Committee Chair you are required to attend this one-hour training.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP

The book club summer read is *The All-Girl Filling Station's Last Reunion* by Fannie Flagg. Discussion will be at dinner Friday, July 21, at 6pm at the home of Elizabeth Van Eerde. Questions or to RSVP email Elizabeth by July 14 at emve@comcast.net.

THE OFFICE

The office area is closed on Saturdays and Sundays. If you need to make copies or need to be in the office area, please come by during the week. It is best to make an appointment as we are short-staffed and may be in a meeting, on lunch or running errands.

Also, regarding the buildings. The buildings are kept locked during the week for the safety of the staff, nursery schoolteachers and children, and groups that use the facilities during the week. The office and the buildings are closed on Saturdays. On Sunday, only buildings that are being used are unlocked – usually the Knoles Building and the Sanctuary. Again, the other buildings are kept locked for the safety of staff and others on campus. We have had several unpleasant encounters with some of the homeless on our campus and we need to be sure that everyone feels safe while on our facility. Thank you for understanding. If you have any questions, please contact Susie Wanden at swanden@cumcstockton.org.