

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP

15th Sunday After Pentecost
Sunday, September 10, 2023



GATHERING

PRELUDE	<i>When Morning Gilds the Skies</i> [(in the style of Debussy) arr. Lani Smith]	Monica Adams
PROCESSIONAL	<i>Love Divine All Loves Excelling</i> [by Charles Wesley]	Raphael Pazo, Bagpipes
GATHERING MOMENT		Laura Dinges
INTROIT	<i>O Praise God</i> [by Eric H. Thiman]	Chancel Choir
*CALL TO WORSHIP		Laura Dinges
	Leader: We humbly come, with burdened hearts, seeking grace that forgiveness imparts. All: Grant us, O Lord, the strength to extend, forgiving others, as you do commend. Leader: The weight of grudges, we long to shed, to heal the wounds, our spirits bled. All: Release our pain, that aches and sears, in mercy's embrace, dissolve our tears. Leader: For in forgiving, we find release, a balm for sorrows, a sense of peace. All: Grant us, O God, the courage we seek, to forgive and heal, with hearts meek. Amen.	
*HYMN OF PRAISE	<i>I Come with Joy</i>	UMH #617
CHILDREN'S MOMENT		Mary Juarez Dalton

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT Laura Dinges

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS (11:00am) Laura Dinges

*PASSING THE PEACE Laura Dinges

(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.*

ANTHEM *Here I Am* Chancel Choir
[by Tony Alonzo]

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE Exodus 14:19-31 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 61) Laura Dinges

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

All: Thanks be to God.

*HYMN *Amazing Grace* (vs. 1, 2, vs 3 Pipes only vs 4 all) UMH #378

SCRIPTURE Matthew 18:21-35 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 20) Laura Dinges

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

All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON "God Forgives Our Sins!" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Laura Dinges

PASTOR'S 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.

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THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS Laura Dinges

OFFERTORY *Highland Cathedral* Raphael Pazo, Bagpipes
[by Ulrich Roeber and Michael Korb] Monica Adams

*DOXOLOGY *What Gift Can We Bring*
***This gift we now bring, this present, this token,
What words can convey it, the joy of this day?
When grateful we come, remembering, rejoicing,
This song we now offer in honor and praise.***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION Laura Dinges

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SENDING FORTH

***BENEDICTION**

***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**

Monica Adams

* Indicates please stand as you are able.

RAPHAEL PAZO is a local musician, vocalist, arranger and composer who plays several musical instruments including violin, viola, guitar, mandolin, ukuleles, lute, turkish oud, recorders, and various types of bagpipes. He began his music education at an early age and attended music schools in his native Puerto Rico. Raphael has performed with the San Francisco Symphony, San Francisco Ballet Orchestra, and the San Francisco Opera Orchestra, as well as many symphony orchestras abroad. Raphael also holds degrees in science, business management, political science, linguistics, comparative religion and international relations. He is a U.S. Army Veteran and is active with several local Veterans' organizations. In addition to music, Raphael enjoys gardening, cooking and traveling. Raphael lives in Lodi with his wife Susan; he is the father of four and grandfather of six.

SERVING YOU TODAY

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

SERMON IN A NUTSHELL: "GOD FORGIVES OUR SINS!"

The Divine Call to Forgive (Matthew 18:15-20)

In the realm of spiritual teachings, forgiveness stands as a central pillar of paramount importance. As exemplified in the teachings of Jesus, forgiveness serves as an instrument of great power, transcending earthly bonds to unleash liberation for both the forgiver and the forgiven. To elucidate this principle, we shall delve into the Old Testament, exploring the unfolding of God's profound desire for freedom, righteousness, and the divine attribute of boundless patience.

In the teachings of Jesus, forgiveness emerges as a prevailing theme, echoing God's divine call to forgive others. Jesus's words, "Whatever you fasten on earth will be fastened in heaven, and whatever you loosen

on earth will be loosened in heaven," underscore the profound interplay between human actions and their heavenly consequences.

Divine Forgiveness and Liberation

Forgiveness stands as an act of reciprocity, as we are reminded that God extends His forgiveness to us for our own shortcomings. Without this divine mercy, humanity would face dire consequences for its actions. Embracing forgiveness as a virtue aligns us with God's desire for our liberation, as evidenced in the Old Testament. The exodus of the Israelites from the oppressive rule of Pharaoh exemplifies God's unwavering commitment to emancipating His people from all forms of bondage.

God's Patience and Human Accountability (Exodus 12:1-14)

Throughout the Exodus narrative, God showcases boundless patience, providing Pharaoh numerous opportunities to alter his heart and heed God's demand to release the Israelites.

In today's Exodus text, Pharaoh, the Egyptian king, rejected God's demand, "Let my people go!" God wanted the Israelites to be free from the oppression of the Egyptians.

At first, God showed God's power through a show of miracles. God made the Nile River into blood temporarily, but no harm was done to the people. (Exodus 7:14-25)

Then God made the lives of Egyptians uncomfortable with frogs and their noises, but no real damage to people. (Exodus 8:1-15)

When Pharaoh did not listen to God, God made Egyptians feel the power of God through gnats and flea stings. This time animals were harmed. (Exodus 8:16-19; 20-30; Exodus 9:1-7)

When Pharaoh did not listen to God, God sent boils and people suffered also even though they did not die. (Exodus 9:8-12)

When Pharaoh did not listen to God, God sent hail (Exodus 9:13-35) and locusts (Exodus 10:1-20) and the Egyptians had financial damages. Still Pharaoh did not listen to God and God took away the light and brought darkness to the land before God stoke the first born of the land. (Exodus 10:21-29)

When people read the Bible, they ask me this question: Why is the God of the Old Testament so violent and judgmental? When you read the process that I explained above, you would know that God was not judgmental and violent from the beginning. God gave Pharaoh opportunities to change his heart more than ten times (Exodus 7:1-10:29).

Ten is the perfect number in the ancient community because humans have ten fingers to count. In other words, God gave enough chance for Pharaoh to repent, but Pharaoh did not listen to God. The death of the first born was the consequence of the accumulated actions of Pharaoh, which could have been avoided. (Exodus 11:1-9)

It is crucial to recognize that God's actions were not driven by judgment and violence from the outset. Instead, **God's interventions were the culmination of Pharaoh's repeated defiance and refusal to listen to divine counsel.** This serves as a profound reminder that God seeks humanity's transformation through compassion and understanding, granting multiple chances for repentance before invoking consequences.

Human Nature and the Pursuit of Freedom

As we scrutinize the Exodus narrative, we come to understand the complexities of human nature. Our innate stubbornness and attachment to worldly gains often hinder our capacity to forgive and free others.

The Civil War in history serves as an analogy, highlighting the necessity of a drastic upheaval to emancipate slaves. Similarly, the divine displays of power aimed at Pharaoh reflect humanity's inclination to prioritize material gains over spiritual righteousness. It is a poignant reminder that our choices possess the power to liberate or ensnare us.

Steps of forgiveness.

Now we know that forgiveness is our call. However, it is not easy. Here are gradual steps on how to forgive others. Jesus said, "If your brother or sister sins against you, go and correct them when you are alone together. If they listen to you, then you've won over your brother or sister. But if they won't listen, take with you one or two others so that every word may be established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. But if they still won't pay attention, report it to the church. If they won't pay attention even to the church, treat them as you would a Gentile and tax collector."

1. Direct talk with the person alone.

The New Testament text outlines the process of forgiving others. It never stops. First, try to talk to the person. If the person listens to you, you will get your sibling. Some people come to me (a pastor) before they talk to the person directly. I do not intervene at this step. I encourage people to go to the person directly and talk to the person directly. I would not be in a triangle. Speak honestly with love. If you cannot say nicely, wait for a while and calm yourself.

2. Direct talk in front of witnesses.

Next step. Talk to the person with one or two others. The others will not say anything, but they can be witnesses to what was said. Still, I am not involved at this step, either. The witnesses should be loving and caring, respectful to both parties (you and the other person).

3. Report to the church.

Only after you take these two steps, report to the church. The church will discuss this conflict issue together and try to find solutions.

4. Treat them as a gentile and tax collector.

If they do not listen to the advice of the church, we will treat them as a gentile or a tax collector. That means that **we should love them and be friends with them. That is how Jesus treated gentiles and tax collectors.** Remember Zacchaeus and Matthew or other gentiles.

When we treat them as disciples of Jesus, we can expect them to follow church guidelines and church laws. When we know that they are gentiles and tax collectors, **we do not require them to meet such expectation.** We just love them and be friends with them.

We do not discipline somebody else's children. We just love them. Smile at them. Forgive them. We yell at and discipline only our children. We forgive them without condition.

God will use our conflicts as fertilizers among us.

As forgiven sinners, we have this holy calling to forgive others. When we transform conflicts into growing pains, we will grow with God's help. Without conflicts nobody grows. Iron sharpens iron. Likewise, people sharpen people. Conflicts that do not break us make us stronger and wiser. Let us not allow any conflict to break us. Our inner strength and humility are required.

May God use all the conflicts among us as fertile ground for us to grow and bear fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

CONNECTIONS



CENTRAL BOOK GROUP

This month's book is *The Mistress of Bhatia House* by Sujata Massey....the latest in the Perveen Mistry series. It's just out but the library has both hardback & kindle copies. If you have trouble getting a copy, the alternate book is *The White Lady* by Jacqueline Winspear author of Maisie Dobbs.

MID-YEAR LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

TODAY after the 11am service, we will have the Mid-Year Leadership Summit to review our goals that we set at the beginning of this year and to follow up.

Each committee chair needs to prepare to present the following:

1. What were the goals of the committee?
2. What have you achieved and what you have not? Why?
3. What is your plan for next year?

Finance Committee will present Budget Process:

Sep 15, Expense Budget Due Date. Plan your committee's activities and budget now with your members.

Oct 15, Pledge Drive Ends. Right after we have the expense budget, we will start a pledge drive. The Finance Committee will work on the budget for 2024.

Nov 2, 5:30pm All-Church Conference.

STEWARDSHIP CLASS

Amidst the sweeping wildfires that engulfed Maui, we are compelled to witness the stark repercussions of our changing climate. In our role as faithful stewards of God's creation, we must acknowledge our shortcomings in tending to God's gifts.

As we gear up for the upcoming Fall season, the Finance Committee will be presenting a Stewardship Class that is open to EVERYONE! The class will be throughout October. This endeavor extends beyond mere pledges and offerings. It's a journey towards embracing our responsibility as custodians of God's wondrous handiwork.

If you are seeking the true essence of stewardship and yearn to learn alongside fellow congregants, we warmly encourage you to share your email address with Pastor Lee at slee@cumcstockton.org. We will meet four times: October 1, 8, 15 & 22. Our gatherings will commence right after the 11am Sunday service in the Fellowship Hall. Each session will be an hour.

2ND ANNUAL PACIFIC INTERFAITH BARBEQUE

Thursday, September 21 from 5.30pm-7.00pm Central will host Pacific interfaith students on our campus for our 2nd Annual Pacific Interfaith Barbeque. Alan Cook heard from many of last year's volunteers that we should do it again. As part of our renewing our Pacific connection this event has been scheduled for September 21. Alan is looking for 20 people to volunteer to help put this event on. If you would like to

help with set-up, clean-up, serving, helping in the kitchen, barbequing, or acting as hosts contact Alan at alancook4138@gmail.com.

FRIENDS OF WADI FOQUIN

All members and friends of Central United Methodist Church are invited to come to the Fellowship Hall at noon on September 17 and again on September 24 to learn about the village of Wadi Foquin in the West Bank, its unique partnership with the United Methodist Church and, an interfaith, international nonprofit that was started here in the California/Nevada Conference to support Wadi Foquin partnership. A simple meal will be served both times. If you would like childcare, contact Alan Cook (alancook4138@gmail.com).

Our guest speaker will be Rev. Michael Yoshii a retired clergy from our conference. This event is sponsored by the Missions Committee, the Education Committee, and the Adult Studies Committee of our church. If you are thinking about attending sign up at the table in the Atrium.

CENTRAL UMC ALL CHURCH CONFERENCE

Thursday, November 2, 2023, 5:00pm

SAVE THE DATE

Sunday October 8, 2023 • 11:00 A.M. Service

Central United Methodist Church is celebrating 25 years as a Reconciling Congregation.

Statement of Reconciliation

As children of God, we are called to share in word and deed the divine love that casts out fear. Made in God's image, we are called to accept ourselves and our sexuality, which is a gift given by God, whatever our sexual orientation. We are called to work together through the Holy Spirit to uphold standards of human relationship grounded in mutual love, responsibility, accountability, trust, and nurture.

We are all forgiven and reconciled children of God, drawn together by our Lord's command to love one another. We invite all to proclaim God's kingdom and to share in all aspects of the life of our congregation: worship, education, stewardship, and service.

Central United Methodist Church is a Reconciling Congregation affirming all persons without regard to race, gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical or mental ability, marital status, economic condition, or anything else that threatens to divide God's family. In our quest to follow the example of Christ, we commit ourselves to loving acts of invitation, welcome and reconciliation, providing ministry to, for, and with all persons without exception.