

Central United Methodist Church
3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP
Laity Sunday
Sunday, October 15, 2023



GATHERING

PRELUDE	<i>We Gather Together</i> (arr. Howard Helvey)	Monica Adams
GATHERING MOMENT		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
INTROIT	<i>Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise</i> (arr. Ric Campero)	Chancel Choir
*CALL TO WORSHIP		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
	Leader: Beloved siblings, let us gather together in the presence of the Lord.	
	All: We want to find unity in the Lord and seek harmony and peace among one another.	
	Leader: With hearts full of gratitude, let us help one another.	
	All: Rejoice and be glad in the Lord always.	
	Leader: We bring our requests before God in prayer and supplication, offering thanksgiving.	
	All: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.	
*HYMN	<i>I Want Jesus to Walk with Me</i>	UMH #521
CHILDREN'S MOMENT		Rev. Sungho Lee
STEWARDSHIP MOMENT		Jeni Bonilla
MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED		
RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS (11:00am)		Jeni Bonilla
*PASSING THE PEACE		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (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.	
ANTHEM	<i>Gather Us In</i> (by Marty Haugen arr. Mark Hayes)	Chancel Choir

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE Exodus 32: 1-14 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 78) Alexis Easton (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
All: Thanks be to God.

***HYMN** *Great Is Thy Faithfulness* UMH #140

SCRIPTURE Matthew 22:1-14 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 24) Alexis Easton (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
All: Thanks be to God.

SERMON "We Worship God" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

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.

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

OFFERTORY *The Gift of Love* Monica Adams
(arr. Howard Helvey)

***DOXOLOGY** *What Gift Can We Bring*
***This gift we now bring, this present, this token,
these 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 Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (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** *Prelude in D* Monica Adams
(Fischer)

*Indicates please stand as you are able.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee
Alexis Easton, 8:30am Worship Leader
Jeni Bonilla, 11:00am Worship Leader
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: “WE WORSHIP GOD” (LAITY SUNDAY)

We have diverse lay ministries.

In the contemporary tapestry of our faith community, Central United Methodist Church proudly embraces the vibrant mosaic of lay ministries. Today marks Laity Sunday, a cherished occasion when we extol the myriad roles undertaken by our dedicated laypeople. Within the hallowed walls of our church, diversity is not merely a notion but a living testament to our commitment.

To hold these diverse ministries together, at Central UMC, the credo is clear: “My way is not the only highway.” We hold in highest esteem the virtue of humility, recognizing that the path to understanding often begins with the acknowledgment that one may err while another may shine with truth.

We respect each other even when we are different from one another.

In these diverse ministries, one thing is common: In our church the construction of bridges is not a mere aspiration but a sacred mandate. For, it is known to all that bridges are not needed where there is but one side; they are required where two sides converge.

Within our Trustee members, a rich tapestry of diverse opinions thrives. It is a testament to their collective wisdom that they have honed the art of coexisting amidst these differences, and the linchpin to this harmony is none other than respect—respect for one another’s viewpoints and the recognition that divergence does not equate to discord.

This ethos of respect extends beyond Trustee meetings and permeates the dynamic between our dedicated staff and our cherished church members. In the spirit of Minister Appreciation Month, one of our fellow congregants eloquently articulated this sentiment: “I don’t agree with everything Pastor Lee preaches nor all of his beliefs, but I appreciate his handling of some thorny issues. His intelligence and knowledge shines in everything he does. We are fortunate to have such a caring person leading our congregation.”

I, personally, embrace such sentiments with gratitude. The capacity to respect me, even when my sermons or beliefs diverge from individual perspectives, is a testament to the thriving intellectual and spiritual discourse within our community. I do not seek blind allegiance from my parishioners; rather, I encourage them to challenge and question my words and convictions. However, the bedrock of our relationship should always be respect.

No one person possesses a monopoly on truth.

In our congregation, we are blessed with a mosaic of beliefs. Some hold that certain documents should remain confidential, while others advocate for transparency in our church’s affairs. I firmly believe that no one person possesses a monopoly on truth. When we stand firm in our convictions, we need not resort to rudeness or arrogance. We can, and must, convey our perspectives with gentleness and respect. It is not the opinions themselves that alienate, but the attitudes with which they are expressed.

Our diversity of opinions is precisely what infuses vitality into our decision-making process. It is a process that allows anyone with an opinion to set it forth as a motion, which is then thoughtfully deliberated upon in our meetings. Decisions emerge collectively from these discussions.

As your pastor, I have no desire to wield my position as a cudgel in church meetings. I earnestly hope that none among us would entertain such a notion. When your opinions face rejection, remember, it is not a personal affront. Rather, it is an acknowledgment that the idea itself may require refinement and improvement. We reject not the person but the concept, and in doing so, we seek progress and growth.

Let us, above all, be guided by respect, as we navigate the intricate tapestry of our diverse church. Theologically, culturally, and in countless other ways, we stand apart. Yet, our aspiration is to construct a model community—one where people coexist harmoniously despite their differences.

Doubt and fear lead us to a false idol.

Doubt and fear, when allowed to fester, can compel us toward the embrace of false idols. It is in those moments when trust and mutual respect falter that the insidious roots of doubt and fear take hold, leading us down a treacherous path. Such was the plight of the Israelites as they anxiously awaited the return of their leader, Moses.

The narrative unfolds as the people observed Moses's prolonged absence on the mountain. Filled with uncertainty, they gathered around Aaron, beseeching him to fashion gods who could guide them. In their frustration, they cast doubt upon the fate of Moses, the man who had liberated them from the shackles of Egypt. Their impatience and unease grew palpable.

Moses, in his ascent to Mount Sinai to receive divine laws, left a void in the hearts of his people. The vacuum was swiftly filled with anxiety and insecurity. Aaron, yielding to their pleas, instructed them to contribute their gold rings, which he meticulously molded into a metal image of a bull calf. Astonishingly, the people swiftly proclaimed, "These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" The idols that they worshipped were gods of doubts and fear.

In contrast, we find an exemplar in Mr. Westbay, who, amidst a community rife with gold-seekers and lawlessness, maintained his unwavering devotion to God. His steadfast faith drew others to the worship of the one true God, illustrating the transformative power of a single individual's unwavering commitment. He was a true worshipper. He worshipped God! Will you be the beacon of true worship, steadfast in your devotion, and unwavering in your trust, even amidst the clamor of uncertainty?

"Respect" is the wedding clothes that we need to wear at the wedding banquet.

In the New Testament reading for today, we have found an interesting question: "Why a loving God throw out a guest who do not wear a wedding cloth?" and "What is a wedding cloth?" The wedding cloth that God requires us to wear is the attitude of RESPECT. This story shows us that when all are welcome, we need to respect others who have totally different opinions from ours.

Jesus once spoke of the kingdom of heaven as a grand wedding celebration, orchestrated by a king in honor of his son's nuptials. The king dispatched servants to summon the invited guests to the festivity, yet the response was one of indifference and apathy. The first round of messengers returned bearing tales of rejection, as invitees were preoccupied with their fields and businesses.

Undaunted by this setback, the king issued a new directive to his servants: broaden the invitation to all, extending it to those on the outskirts of town, irrespective of their moral standing. At its core, this wedding celebration is emblematic of the union between humanity and the divine. It encapsulates the yearning of God to dwell within our souls, to labor alongside us as we embark on the sacred work of Christ in the world. The church,

as we proclaim, is not merely a building but the living body of Jesus Christ, enacting Christ's mission in the world. It is an invitation to partner with God as ambassadors of divine grace.

Yet, as the parable further illuminates, though many may be invited, few are chosen. Upon the arrival of the diverse gathering, the king observed one individual conspicuously absent from the attire befitting the occasion. He queried the man about his attire, met with silence. In response, the king ordered the man bound and cast into the darkest abyss, where anguish and gnashing of teeth awaited him.

Within the allegory, the proper attire symbolizes a readiness of heart and spirit, a genuine intention to respect others in the banquet.

We will find diverse missions and ministries and many ways of doing our work.

In the quest to preserve unity amid diversity, one vital principle stands paramount: respect. Recently, we marked a significant milestone, the 25th anniversary of our status as a Reconciling Congregation. At its core, reconciliation is a testament to our unwavering commitment to inclusivity—a commitment that embraces all, regardless of race, gender, age, or sexual orientation. It's an ethos that compels us to collaborate with those whose convictions may stand in stark opposition to our own. It is in this respect for others that we find the bedrock upon which harmonious coexistence is built.

In an era where the world grapples with political divisions, both domestically and on the international stage, this value of respect holds particular resonance. It is, in many ways, the antidote to the specter of nuclear conflict and global catastrophe. The imperative to respect one another's perspectives and differences is essential to our collective well-being.

Our recent guest, Reverend Michael Yoshi, exemplified this ethos with his impassioned advocacy for the Palestinians. Even as he fervently championed their cause, he demonstrated a deep respect for those whose passions lie elsewhere, acknowledging, "They may have a fervor for the homeless in Stockton, or a compassion for the people in North Korea. God calls different people for different purposes. I respect that." Such an attitude mirrors the teachings of Jesus, inspiring us to transcend our differences and unite in respect.

On this Laity Sunday, let us reaffirm our foundational commitment to living and working together harmoniously. It is imperative that we uphold this commitment, especially when confronted with differing viewpoints. Instead of descending into shouting matches when debates arise, let us endeavor to engage with one another calmly, using the power of our voices to present our cases with conviction and confidence.

This respect is the cornerstone of our collective mission and ministry, underpinning the efforts of the hundreds who volunteer to serve our church. It is an essential value that unites us, a crucial aspect of our worship of God. In our worship, we declare that God alone possesses the ultimate truth, while we, as mere creatures, possess only partial truths. We find wisdom in learning from each other and growing together when we maintain this mutual respect.

In the absence of respect for others, we risk straying into the realm of idolatry, akin to the Israelites who fashioned golden calves in the wilderness. Let us not arrive at the divine wedding banquet without the proper wedding garments, but instead, let us worship God with the proper attitude and demeanor. In doing so, our worship will transcend mere ritual and become true and genuine worship in the eyes of God. Amen.

CENTRAL UMC ALL CHURCH CONFERENCE
Thursday, November 2, 2023, 5:00pm
Fellowship Hall



MEMORIAL SERVICE

Our devoted and loyal church member Sally Mills passed away on September 5, 2023. Sally's spirit and enthusiasm were felt not only at church but at many music venues in town where she was a regular attendee. Her daughter Erin Mills has arranged for Sally's memorial to be held at CUMC on Saturday, October 28 at 2 pm.

GREAT PUMPKIN DAY RETURNS

It is with great joy that we announce that our Great Pumpkin Day will return to our campus Sunday, October 29 from 12.15pm – 1.30pm. This is a day that celebrates the child in all of us. It means wearing a costume to the 11.00am service, participating in the parade at 12.15pm. Great Pumpkin Day is decorated car trunks; hosted by Central members and friends, candy, pumpkin games, Cambodian food, music, hot dogs, and chips, pumpkin pie and so much more.

Central Methodist Nursery School families, and Cleveland School TK- 2nd grade families will be invited to join our church family that afternoon.

If we are going to pull this event off your help is needed. At the present time we have four trunk hosts. Ten more are needed. Trunk hosts decorate their car trunks and pass out candy or other goodies. Our Great Pumpkin Day Host will pick their favorite decorated trunk and give the winner a prize! Invite a friend or someone you sit by on Sunday morning to host with you. Pumpkins of all sizes are needed for game prizes. We have 4 pumpkins, and we need at least 20. Bake a pumpkin pie or purchase one.

Volunteers are needed to set up, grill hot dogs, serve, clean up, help with pumpkin games, serve as the Great Pumpkin welcoming committee and so much more. If you are not able to help, consider making a \$10 donation. On the memo line of your check write Great Pumpkin Day.

Sign up to help this Sunday.

JOIN THE GREAT PUMPKIN DAY PUMPKIN DECORATING CONTEST!

Get ready for a fun-filled Great Pumpkin Day on October 29th, and we're inviting all groups and members of our congregation to participate in a Pumpkin Decorating Contest. This is your chance to showcase your creative spirit and have a blast with your fellow church members!

Contest Rules:

1. **Decorate, Don't Carve:** Please refrain from carving your pumpkin. Get creative with paint, decorations, and other non-destructive methods to bring your pumpkin to life.
2. **Naming Your Pumpkin:** Each group or individual should give their pumpkin a creative and meaningful name.
3. **Prizes Await:** The decorated pumpkins will be put on display, and everyone will have the chance to cast their vote. The winner with the most votes will receive a special prize!

Suggested Groups: Choir

- Admin Staff (Yes, Pastor Lee, we're looking at you!)
- Worship Committee
- Finance Committee
- Godly Play
- Youth Group

- United Methodist Women
- Members of the Congregation

You're not limited to these groups – anyone from our church community can participate. We encourage you to team up with others or create your own unique pumpkin masterpiece.

When & Where: Bring your decorated pumpkin to the church on October 29th. If you need assistance transporting your pumpkin to the church, please contact Andrea Moccia. She can be reached via text at 209-406-9669 or email at moccia.andi@gmail.com.

Let's make this Great Pumpkin Day memorable and full of creative spirit! We can't wait to see the amazing pumpkin creations you come up with. Get decorating and have a fantastic time celebrating together.

For inspiration check out Pinterest!

THE NOMINATION COMMITTEE

The Nomination Committee extends an invitation to all willing hearts within our congregation. We are in search of dedicated individuals who are eager to serve in vital roles within our church community – the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) and the Trustee Committee.

Despite our best efforts, the Nomination Committee has faced challenges in identifying individuals willing to undertake these crucial responsibilities. Our church is predominantly powered by the dedication and service of lay volunteers, not just our dedicated staff. Without your participation, our ministries simply cannot thrive.

Positions Now Available:

1. Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC):

The SPRC plays a pivotal role in supporting and supervising our dedicated staff members. They are responsible for the hiring and termination of staff, overseeing their work within our church, and determining their salaries and benefits – akin to the Human Resources department in other organizations. If you feel called to serve in the SPRC, please reach out to Pastor Lee.

2. Trustee Committee:

The Trustee Committee is entrusted with the care and maintenance of our cherished church property and facilities. They are the diligent hands that repair broken facilities, negotiate contracts with workers on behalf of our church, and handle the acquisition and sale of church properties. If you are eager to serve within the Trustee Committee, please contact Pastor Lee.

This is a wonderful opportunity to contribute your time, skills, and dedication to our church's continued growth and well-being. We encourage you to prayerfully consider these roles and reach out to Pastor Lee to express your interest.

Let us remember that our church thrives when we come together as a community to serve, and with your help, we can continue to spread God's love and fulfill our mission.

STEWARDSHIP VIDEO

We are offering a stewardship video on Facebook and YouTube. Please watch them and respond. One video a week will be uploaded for 4 weeks.

STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN

Be a good steward of Central! Don't forget to return your pledge card by October 15th. Volunteers are always needed to help with set up, decorations, and take down for events. Special talents such as music (singing, playing an instrument), art (drawing, making banners, teaching youth about ascetics), crafts (quilt making, shawl making, decorating the sanctuary and flower selection and exhibits), gardening (help keep our gardens beautiful all year) and cooking/baking for mealtime events. Volunteering also provides an opportunity to meet new people and make new friends.