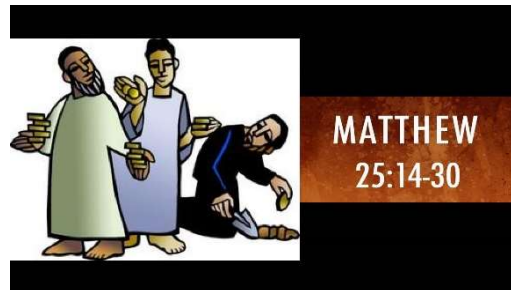


Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP Sunday, November 19, 2023



GATHERING

PRELUDE

Blessed Assurance
[Knapp/Chung]

Monica Adams

GATHERING MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (11:00am)

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (11:00am)

Leader: Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth.

All: **Worship the Lord with gladness!**

Leader: Come before him with joyful songs.

All: **We are God's people, the sheep of his pasture.**

Leader: Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise!

All: **Give thanks to him and praise his name.**

Leader: The Lord is good and his love endures forever!

All: **His faithfulness continues through all generations.**

*HYMN

Gather Us In

TFWS #2236

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Rev. Sungho Lee

STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

Stewardship Video 5

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (11:00am)

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

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

Nedy Tovera

*PASSING THE PEACE

Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (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 Lift Up Mine Eyes
[by Allen Pote]

Chancel Choir

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE Judges 4:1-7 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 220) Chris Chan (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Nedy Tovera (11:00am)
All: **Thanks be to God.**

***HYMN** *Holy God, We Praise Your Name* (vs 1-4) UMH #79

SCRIPTURE Matthew 25:14-30 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 28) Chris Chan (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Nedy Tovera (11:00am)
All: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON "Give Thanks To God" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (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 Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (11:00am)

OFFERTORY *The Church's One Foundation* Monica Adams
[Wesley, arr. Lloyd Larson]

***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 Chris Chan (8:30am), Nedy Tovera (11:00am)

SENDING FORTH

***BENEDICTION** Rev. Sungho Lee

***RESPONSE** *Let There Be Peace on Earth* UMH #431

***Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth the peace that was meant to be.***

***With God as Creator children all are we.
Let me walk with each other in perfect harmony.***

***Let peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every step I take let this be my solemn vow;***

***To take each moment and live each moment in peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth and let it begin with me.***

The flowers on the altar are given by the Shuemake Family: Happy Birthday to Mom, Grandma and Great Grandma: Carol Troutner!

*Indicates please stand as you are able.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee
Chris Chan, 8:30am Worship Leader
Nedy Tovera, 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: "GIVE THANKS TO GOD"

A Brush with Fate: A Year Ago Last November

In a world where life can change in an instant, I found myself thrust into the midst of chaos and uncertainty on a fateful November 13th, one year ago. It was an ill-fated car accident that would alter the course of my existence, an experience that would leave an indelible mark on my soul.

San Joaquin General Hospital became my sanctuary, a place where the relentless hands of time seemed to slow as I embarked on a perilous journey towards recovery. Eight hours of intricate surgery and four days in the Intensive Care Unit were the crucible through which I traversed. Tubes and wires connected me to the realm of the living, while diligent nurses meticulously attended to my body with the tender care of angels.

During those trying days, I came to realize that the only solace I could find was in prayer. And so, from all corners of the world, a symphony of prayers soared, transcending boundaries and beliefs. The faithful congregations of Central UMC and Concord UMC, the compassionate embrace of my Facebook friends, the unwavering support of my family and friends in Korea – all united in the collective act of beseeching the divine for my well-being.

I was humbled to witness the incredible power of prayer firsthand. In my most vulnerable state, I became a living testament to the astonishing might of faith and supplication. My heart was "strangely warmed" as the spiritual currents of these earnest prayers coursed through me.

Miraculously, a mere four days after the surgery that had pieced me back together, I was discharged from the hospital. My ribs, once shattered, were now held together by six platinum sentinels on my left side. In a feat that left even the medical experts astonished, I regained my independence remarkably quickly, confidently making my way to the bathroom without assistance.

My concerned wife approached the doctors, her eyes brimming with worry, and inquired, "Is it typical for patients to be released so soon?" The doctors, who had borne witness to my extraordinary journey, had no choice but to concede that this was far from ordinary.

I couldn't help but pose a question to one of the medical professionals: "Can I boldly proclaim that this is a testament to the undeniable power of prayer?" The doctor, though not of the Christian faith, nodded in agreement, for in the face of the extraordinary, faith knows no boundaries.

I was able to walk with a cane after one week. After two weeks, I was able to walk 2 miles a day around the park around my home. I led the Thanksgiving Service at home with family and friends. I used the Incentive Spirometer as my sermon tool.

Lessons from the Gospel and the Spirometer

In the middle of a personal health crisis, I found myself confronting a fundamental truth that transcends both the spiritual and the physical. As my lung battled a menacing influx of water, I was unable to muster the strength to push the spirometer to the coveted number 500, a seemingly insurmountable barrier. But in the face of such physical challenges, a more profound lesson was unfolding.

Just as my lung struggled to reach a particular number, my mind grappled with its own set of numbers: complaints and doubts. In the haze of adversity, giving thanks appeared to be an elusive feat. It was in these moments of vulnerability that the Gospel provided clarity, offering a timeless parable that reverberates with relevance today: Matthew 25:14-30, The Parable of the Bags of Gold.

In this parable, a man about to embark on a journey entrusted his wealth to his servants. Each received a different number of bags of gold according to their abilities. Those who appreciated what they had were inspired to use their resources, producing a fruitful return for their master. Conversely, the servant who failed to appreciate the gift entrusted to him hid the gold, resulting in neither growth nor benefit.

The essence of this parable is strikingly clear: appreciation and stewardship of one's blessings lead to productivity and a strengthened connection with the divine. Conversely, ingratitude and neglect of one's gifts ultimately result in stagnation and the erosion of one's spiritual connection.

It was through the lens of this lesson that I navigated my own journey towards recovery. In my hours of vulnerability, I discovered the profound impact of prayer and gratitude. As I counted my blessings and praised God, I not only managed to surpass the spirometer's number 500, but I went on to reach the astounding figures of 2000, 3000, and even 3,500 by the time of my discharge. The power of prayer and thanksgiving manifested in the physical realm, underscoring a fundamental truth: what works for the body can hold just as true for the soul.

In a world rife with challenges and uncertainties, the parable and the spirometer serve as potent reminders. We possess the capacity to determine our own spiritual and physical outcomes. The choice between gratitude and ingratitude, between productivity and stagnation, ultimately rests in our hands. Just as the faithful servants reaped the fruits of their labor, so too can we experience the profound transformation that comes with counting our blessings, offering gratitude, and embracing the power of prayer.

The Power of Asking with the Right Motives

In Matthew 7:7, we encounter the oft-quoted biblical verse, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." It's a reassuring promise, but in practice, many find themselves puzzled when their requests seem to go unanswered. To understand this conundrum, we must turn to the stories of old, like the one found in Judges 4:1-7, which reveals a recurring pattern in human behavior and divine intervention.

The story of Israel in Judges is one of cyclical crisis. Time and again, the Israelites find themselves ensnared in trouble when they turn away from the ways of the Lord. It's a tale of divine judgment, repentance, deliverance, and, sadly, a subsequent return to transgression. In this instance, the Israelites had provoked the Lord's anger, and God allowed their enemies, led by Jabin king of Canaan, to oppress them for two decades. In their anguish, they cried out to the Lord for help.

Deborah, a prophetess and a judge, not only led militarily but also served as a spiritual guide. Recognizing that the root of their problems lay in their lack of knowledge of God's words, she held court under the Palm of Deborah, teaching them the ways of the Lord. Her actions highlight that salvation wasn't just about being saved from external foes; it was about reconnecting with the source of their faith, addressing the fundamental issue of spiritual knowledge and relationship with God.

James 4:3 further underscores the complexity of prayer and asks us to examine our motives. "When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures." In this context, the right motives align with the biblical desire for the Holy Spirit. Seeking the Holy Spirit is seeking the fruits it brings love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, as mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. As I emphasized before, F=HG2 (Faith starts with Humility and end with Gratitude Square-Thanks be to God who saves us and uses our time, talents, treasure, and testimony.)

The process is not just a spiritual one but has tangible effects on our well-being. Romans 8:23 tells us that, as we receive the first fruits of the Spirit, we eagerly await the redemption of our bodies. Prayer, when driven by the desire for the Holy Spirit (Humility), brings both spiritual (Gratitude) and physical (Gratitude) healing.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving, it's an opportune time to reflect on our relationship with God and offer praise for the abundance in our lives. During adversity, the words of Habakkuk 3:17-19 remind us that even when all seems bleak, we can find joy in God our Savior.

In sum, the power of asking lies not just in the act itself, but in the purity of our motives. By humbly seeking the Holy Spirit, we unlock the potential for spiritual and physical transformation. As we give thanks during this season, let's remember that our connection with the divine can be the key to a fuller, more enriched life. Amen.

CONNECTIONS

A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS PROPS NEEDS

Join Our Team and Bring the Magic of "A Charlie Brown Christmas" to Life!

Are you a creative genius with a passion for crafting and building? Do you love the holiday spirit and want to be a part of something truly special? The 3700Youth group is seeking enthusiastic individuals to help us create props for our upcoming production of "A Charlie Brown Christmas"!

Check out the images:



Join us in making this holiday season unforgettable for our audience! To get involved or inquire about these exciting opportunities, please contact Elaine Hanley (Youth Director) at elaine@cumcstockton.org or call (209) 466-5046 Ext: 5. Let's create magic together!

BOOK GROUP

The discussion of the recent book - *The Keeper of Hidden Books* - has been postponed. It's such a good book & deserves discussion by more than 3 people. Hopefully those who couldn't access the book will still be able to read it. For those who want a new title...Carol is reading *River Sing Me Home* by Eleanor Shearer. The library has 6 hard copies & it's not a war story!

DONATIONS NEEDED

Our Godly Play and Nursery School program is growing! We are so grateful to experience growth in our Sunday programming for children. On Sunday's children ages 5-11 join us for Godly play and those under 5 have the opportunity to play together in the nursery while their families attend church service. During those times we like to provide a small snack and need help from our congregation to stock our snack cabinet! If you are able, donations of water, juice pouches, goldfish, granola bars or any other kid-friendly snacks would be greatly appreciated. Bring your donations to church and give them to Andrea Moccia or drop them off at the Godly Play room in the Knoles building.

Andrea is working on a plan to figure out where we can store the snacks so that the attendants have access to them on Sundays.

ADVENT BIBLE STUDY

Advent Bible Study will continue the Leadership Bible Study (Samuel, Saul, and David) that we had during the summer. We did not finish the book and we will finish the book this time. Jesus is a "descendent of David" and what qualities of King David made him an ancestor of Jesus would be the key point of the Bible Study.

SOME PEOPLE JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH. . . SERVING AT ST. MARY'S DINING ROOM

For quite a few years, a number of Centralites have served lunches on the food line at St. Mary's Dining Room. Recently they told me that serving on alternate Fridays wasn't enough for them; they'd like to serve *every* Friday. St. Mary's is happy with that!

The Basics: St. Mary's Dining Room, 545 W. Sonora St, Stockton, Friday's from 11:30 (sign-in) until 1:00 pm.

Dress: For your safety, wear long pants & closed-toe shoes. When serving, wear an apron (your own or supplied), hair covering (supplied hairnet or baseball cap) and supplied plastic gloves (sanitary regulations).

If you'd like to join our serving team every week, or just twice a month, or just when you can, you learn more by calling Alan England (209-298-8634) or Julius Hastings (209-401-0771).

SAVE THE DATE: FEBRUARY 29TH 2024!

Rotary Read-In, 10:00 am - Cleveland and Team Charter Schools - Sign-ups will start in January.

GIVE A GIFT THIS ADVENT SEASON

It is a Central tradition to decorate our Sanctuary with poinsettias. If you would like to give a gift of \$15 to the Poinsettia Fund in memory or in honor of a special someone, please do so today. Fill out the form and mark your contribution "Poinsettia" on the memo line. All donors will be recognized in our bulletin on December 17 and 24. Donors may take a poinsettia home after **Christmas Eve** services.

Deadline: December 12.

YOUR NAME (who the poinsettia is from)_____

IN MEMORY OF _____

or

IN HONOR OF _____

or

OTHER MESSAGE _____