

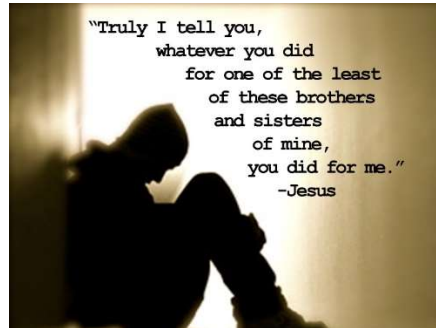
# Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

### *Christ the King Sunday*

Sunday, November 26, 2023



## GATHERING

### PRELUDE

*My Shepherd, You supply My Need*  
(Aaron David Miller)

Monica Adams

### GATHERING MOMENT

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

### \*CALL TO WORSHIP

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

**Leader:** Today I am taking sides, I am taking the side of Peace

**All:** **Peace, which I will not abandon even when its voice is drowned out by hurt and hatred.**

**Leader:** I am taking the side of Peace whose name has barely been spoken.

**All:** **I will hold Peace in my arms and share my body's breath, lest Peace be added to the body count.**

**Leader:** Don't ask me to wave a flag today unless it is a flag of Peace.

**All:** **Don't ask me to sing an anthem unless it is a song of Peace. Don't ask me to take sides unless it is the side of Peace. Amen**

*(Rabbi Irwin Keller, Oct. 17, 2023)*

### \*HYMN

*All People That on Earth Do Dwell*

UMH #75

### CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Martha Shuemake

### STEWARDSHIP MOMENT

United Methodist Student Day

### MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

### PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

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

Joe Krider

### \*PASSING THE PEACE

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Joe Krider (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

*Thank the Lord Folk Tune*  
(arr. Rene Clausen)

Chancel Choir

**PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE**

SCRIPTURE

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 802)

Alexis Easton (8:30am)

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

Joe Krider (11:00am)

All: **Thanks be to God.**

\*HYMN

*Crown Him with Many Crowns*

UMH #327

SCRIPTURE

Matthew 25:31-46 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 29)

Alexis Easton (8:30am)

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

Joe Krider (11:00am)

All: **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

“God is a Good Shepherd”

Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Joe Krider (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), Joe Krider (11:00am)

OFFERTORY

*The Lord's My Shepherd*  
(arr. Lloyd Larson)

Monica Adams

\*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), Joe Krider (11:00am)

**SENDING FORTH**

\*BENEDICTION

Rev. Sungho Lee

\*RESPONSE

*Let There Be Peace on Earth*  
***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.***

UMH #431

***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.*

\*POSTLUDE

Monica Adams

*The flowers on the altar are given by Joe, Kathy and Abby in loving memory of Nancy DeBolt.*

\*Indicates please stand as you are able.

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**SERVING YOU TODAY**

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee  
Alexis Easton, 8:30am Worship Leader  
Joe Krider, 11:00am Worship Leader  
Martha Shuemake, 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

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**SERMON IN A NUTSHELL: "GOD IS A GOOD SHEPHERD."**

**God will mend the wounded and resurrect the deceased.**

In the divine promise of restoration, it is affirmed that God, the ultimate shepherd, pledges to mend the wounded and resurrect the deceased. Drawing from the Old Testament, God's unwavering commitment is articulated: "I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness."

This divine rescue transcends national boundaries, as God extends compassion impartially to Palestinians and Israelis, embraces both Ukrainians and Russians, and extends love to the people of Taiwan and China. The divine message underscores the universality of God's love, indifferent to human-imposed divisions based on race and region.

God declares, "I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice."

In the face of current turmoil and tribulations, it is asserted that these challenges are transient. God, possessing eternal power and boundless resources, is poised to rectify all wrongdoings and divisions. The ultimate purpose is to pave the way for God's created people to coexist harmoniously, finding enduring peace and a shared space to thrive collectively.

### **Beware of deception.**

In the divine lens, we are a unified family under God, transcending political affiliations that seek to fragment us for self-serving motives. Whether Republican or Democrat, supporter of Israel or Palestine, ally of Ukraine or Russia, these political leaders aim to divide, urging us to take sides.

Once we choose a side, they brand us as one-sided, prioritizing their interests over the broader community and the world. God, however, stands apart, shepherding all peoples and nations without allegiance to political divisions. God's allegiance is to the needy.

When God takes sides, it is with the vulnerable. During the Holocaust, God sided with the persecuted Jews; when Israel mistreated Palestinians, God stood with the Palestinians. In instances of Hamas harming Israelis, God empathized with the grieving families, and when innocent Palestinians suffered, God sided with them. This divine activity transcends political lines.

God advocates against unfair treatment, contrasting sharply with the interests of arms dealers who perpetuate conflicts globally for profit. They manipulate people into taking sides, fostering division. Yet, our stance differs; we reject partisanship and advocate for peace.

Like God, our assistance is not contingent on nationality or ideology. A good Samaritan aids a person in need, irrespective of their background. God's sole concern is the individual's helpless situation. Refusing aid based on race, nationality, class, or group affiliation contradicts the inclusive nature of a "good" shepherd, exemplified by God's care for all.

In the unwavering commitment to prayer and assistance, our focus remains on aiding the needy, irrespective of geopolitical perceptions. Whether supporting the people in Wadi Fauquin, condemning Hamas attacks, or aiding Ukraine during its invasion, our allegiance lies with humanitarian principles, not political affiliations.

### **Eternal judgment**

Matthew 25:31-46 serves as our guiding principle, emphasizing that eternal judgment is based on actions that demonstrate compassion and aid for those in need. It transcends political boundaries, echoing the sentiment that assisting the vulnerable is akin to serving a higher purpose.

It's imperative not to co-opt God's church for personal political platforms. While citizens can engage with representatives individually, leveraging the collective resources of a faith group for personal political agendas contradicts the inclusive ethos of aiding those in need. God's care knows no bounds of nationality or ideology.

Like doctors on surgery tables, we strive to save lives without judgment based on background. As citizens, we contribute to justice through appropriate channels, ensuring that collective resources serve humanitarian purposes, echoing the impartial care demonstrated by those working to save lives.

### **Advocate for peace through both prayer and action.**

It is commonly asserted that justice is the cornerstone of peace, yet individuals often promote their version of justice, detached from a broader understanding rooted in divine principles. The incessant pursuit of "their" justice often involves violence and conflict, with each side claiming moral high ground, leading to a perpetual cycle of injustice. The question arises: whose justice holds the moral high ground, and can one truly possess justice?

In the pursuit of peace, humility is key. Acknowledge the possibility of being wrong, fostering openness to alternative perspectives. Disagreements should not be met with violence and force, but rather through civilized debate and attentive listening. Attempt to understand opposing views, recognizing the potential for personal growth, and learning even in disagreement. Resorting to guns and weapons stifles dialogue and only begets temporary dominance, inevitably resulting in prolonged conflict spanning generations.

The Ezekiel text presents a glimmer of hope, envisioning a final judgment that will liberate ordinary people from leaders exploiting resources for personal gain and causing harm to families for ideological pursuits. God, depicted as our shepherd, promises peace for individuals like you and me.

Anticipate the arrival of the prince of peace, who will bring an end to rapacious wars and manipulative political games. The collective yearning for the Lord's coming becomes a beacon of hope for a future free from the shackles of greed-driven conflicts, where lasting peace prevails.

May God, the Prince of Peace, be our guide in this conflicting world and uncertain times! Amen!

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## 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](mailto:elaine@cumcstockton.org) or call (209) 466-5046 Ext: 5. Let's create magic together!

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### UNITED METHODIST STUDENT DAY

The United Methodist Church believes that every person has the right to an education and that the responsibility of educating young people rests with the family, faith communities and the government. This coming Sunday, November 26 we the people of Central United Methodist Church will have the opportunity to give to the United Methodist Student Day fund. By making a donation you are supporting scholarships and low-interest loans that help young leaders achieve their dreams.

Student Day was first celebrated in 1940 when a college education could be attained for \$450 annually. Today that same education cost is much higher.

**As a child who experienced being bullied, Benjamin Carlson found refuge in his church. As a college student, the Gift of Hope scholarship offset some of his college expenses and he says it "reinforced my understanding that The United Methodist Church supports [its] students."**

The Missions Committee would like to invite you to invest in young leaders by giving generously to the United Methodist Student Day offering. Your donation will make it possible for students to change the world in the name of God's love – to live out their dreams for a better world.

Donations may be placed in the offering plate or mailed to Central United Methodist Church, 3700 Pacific Ave., Stockton, CA. 95204. Make sure that on the memo line of your check that you write UM Student Day.

## **BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

Central's Blue Christmas Service will be held on the longest night of the year; Thursday, December 21, at 6.30pm in the Fireside Room. Here are several reasons to attend this service.

**1. It's too easy to rush this season away.**

By the time December 21 comes around, we are already 21 days into Advent. During these past 21 days have you taken the time to pause, to pray? We spend a lot of time preparing decorations, preparing packages, enjoying family time, and preparing food. Advent only asks that we prepare ourselves. The Blue Christmas service offers time, and a holy space, to do that.

**2. Not everyone is "merry and bright."**

The holidays can be a sad, lonesome time for anyone suffering from depression or grief. The Blue Christmas service will offer hope and light to those who need it most. Even if you are not feeling blue, come lend a shoulder to someone who is on December 21 at 6.30pm.

**3. There are people you need to remember.**

We've all lost someone-people we loved who have died, moved away, or become estranged from us. Our losses may be new, or decades old. The Blue Christmas service will bring those people to mind, love them, forgive them, forgive ourselves and find comfort.

**4. You will leave with a renewed sense of peace in your heart.**

That's Alan Cook's promise to you.

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## **CENTRAL INVITES OUR SENIORS TO A FREE LUNCH**

Are you a senior and interested in: A grab-and-go meal? A sit down meal with other seniors?

Come to Central on Wednesday, December 6 between noon and 1.00pm for a restaurant prepared meal that you can either eat with others in the Fireside Room or take with you. The Isaiah Partnership Team is encouraging you to bring a friend who does not attend Central. There will be Christmas music and hopefully an opportunity to join in singing carols.

While you don't have to sign up in advance, doing so will help us plan, and a limited amount of food will be available at the event.

Sign up sheets will be available outside the worship services on Sunday November 26 and December 3, or you can contact Alan Cook to let him know you're planning on attending.

Questions? Contact Alan Cook (209) 610.7893 or [alancook4138@gmail.com](mailto:alancook4138@gmail.com)

Funding is made possible by the Princeton Theological Seminary Isaiah Partnership program.

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## **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.

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## **BOOK GROUP**

Let's try to meet Sunday Dec 3rd since other events are scheduled for the next 2 weeks after church. Hopefully, more people have been able to read *The Keeper of Hidden Books*.

**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 29<sup>TH</sup> 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** \_\_\_\_\_