

# Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

## ORDER OF WORSHIP

Christmas Eve Service • 2023 • 7:00pm



### PRELUDE

*Away in a Manger*  
(arr. Mark McDonald)  
*Huron Carol*  
(arr. Mark Hayes)

Monica Adams

### WORDS OF WELCOME

Alan Cook

### LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Kristen Bahler

One: Let us light the Candle of Hope. May we hold fast to hope's patient possibilities. May we lift them high that they might catch the light of our dreams and shine bright in our broken world.

**All: May hope light the world this Christmas.**

One: Let us light the Candle of Peace. May we inspire the world with peace. May we touch it to our lives that in every place of stress, frustration, or fear we might feel the presence of peace easing our hearts and transforming our lives.

**All: May peace light the world this Christmas.**

One: Let us light the Candle of Joy. May we create joy in all our surroundings as we share gifts, meals, and simple pleasures with family and friends. May the easy gift of a smile bring the power of joy's touch to those we meet.

**All: May joy light the world this Christmas.**

One: Let us light the Candle of Love. May love flow from our hearts with abundance filling every moment with the season's gifts of hope, peace and joy. May our children teach us the truth of this most precious gift – we are nothing without each other. Let us live, then, in the blessing of love.

**All: May love light the world this Christmas season.**

One: May we hold fast to this sliver of mystery, this truth upon which we set the whole of who we are. May we call ourselves back to it time and again, until we are filled with the wonder that is our life – its hope, its peace, its joy, its love. May our energies be given to the transformation of this world – from despair into hope; from darkness into light; from fear into love.

**All: May we be bold. May we be daring. May we be love.**

**\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Kristen Bahler

One: Let us go, just as we are, to see what has happened. Let us go with the shepherds:

**All: let us go and find the One of whom the angels sang.**

One: Let us go with those who are wise:

**All: let us go and find the One who brings God's truth to us.**

One: Let us go with the poor in spirit, and in flesh; let us go with those who are humbled by life:

**All: let us find the Glory of God born in a stable and placed in a feeding trough.**

One: Let us go with our friends and family; let us go with our neighbors and with strangers:

**All: let us go all the children of God to Mary and Joseph and the child.**

One: O come, let us go to the Babe of Bethlehem; O come, let us adore him!

**All: Christ our Lord!**

**\*HYMN**

*O Come, All Ye Faithful*

UMH # 234

**OPENING PRAYER (In Unison)**

Alan Cook

**O God of the Baby of Bethlehem, we come into your presence with praise and thanksgiving. We hear the glad tidings of the angels' voices; we come to experience this good news of great joy for all the people. As the shepherds traveled to Bethlehem, we have traveled here - excited, expectant, hopeful: a bit skeptical. Let the words of the Christmas story seep into our hearts, to be treasured and pondered anew. We are here; we are ready, O God! Let the light of your love break forth. Amen.**

**MUSICAL GIFT**

*It Came upon the Midnight Clear*  
(Arr. Marianne Forman)

Langham Family

**PASTORAL PRAYER AND 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.**

**CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

**OFFERTORY**

*O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*

Elaine Hanley, Soloist  
Monica Adams

**DOXOLOGY**

*Advent Doxology*

(TUNE *Once in Royal David's City* MUSIC Henry J Gauntlett, R.G. Huff)

***Praise to God, the One who made us. Praise to Christ, God's only Son.***

***Praise the Spirit, ever with us. Praise the Godhead, Three in One.***

***Clear a Paith! Prepare the way! Advent leads to Christmas Day!***

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Rev. Sungho Lee

**FIRST READING**

Erica Holly Lamb

**HYMN**

*O Little Town of Bethlehem* (verses 1 & 2)

page 230

**SECOND READING**

Erica Holly Lamb

**HYMN**

*Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming*

Page 216

<b>THIRD READING HYMN</b>	<i>The Friendly Beasts</i> (verses 2-4)	Wyatt Walther page 227
<b>FOURTH READING HYMN</b>	<i>Away in a Manger</i>	Morgan Jackson page 217
<b>FIFTH READING HYMNS</b>	<i>While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks</i> (verses 1 & 3)	Linda & Matthew Tualla page 236
<b>SIXTH READING HYMN</b>	<i>The First Noel</i> (verses 1 & 2)	Jed Duke page 245
<b>SEVENTH READING HYMN</b>	<i>What Child Is This</i> (verses 1 & 2)	Charlie Juarez Dalton page 219
<b>EIGHTH READING HYMN</b>	<i>There's a Song in the Air</i> (verses 1-3)	Micah Jackson page 249
<b>NINETH READING HYMN</b>	<i>We Three Kings</i> (verses 2-4)	Hollis Langham Page 254
<b>TENTH READING HYMN</b>	<i>Silent Night, Holy Night</i>	Alan Cook Page 239
<b>LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE</b>		Anne Swehla Garcia
<b>SENDING FORTH</b>		Rev. Sungho Lee
<b>POSTLUDE</b>	<i>Go, Tell it on the Mountain</i> (arr. Mark Hayes)	Monica Adams

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**OFFICE HOLIDAY SCHEDULE:**

<b>Dec. 25—26</b>	<b>Office Closed</b>
<b>Dec. 27—28</b>	<b>9:00am—12:00pm</b>
<b>Dec. 29 Jan 2</b>	<b>Office Closed</b>

# CONNECTIONS



## **NEW YEAR'S EVE DAY**

**Sunday, December 31** there will be only two services. The Khmer service will be at 10.15am in the Fireside Room and our 11:00am in the Sanctuary. **THERE WILL NOT BE AN 8:30PM SERVICE.**

## **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 31**

The congregation is being invited to move closer to the front of the Sanctuary during the season of Advent. The back five rows on either side of the sanctuary have been roped off. We hope you will get accustomed to this and move closer to the front after the first of the year.

## **COLUMBARIUM EVENT CHRISTMAS EVE**

The Columbarium Committee would like to invite members of the congregation and family members to join us this evening in the Columbarium following the 7:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service (weather permitting). Christmas is a time when we remember loved ones who are no longer with us and we hope that this brief event and a few traditional sing-along carols will rekindle fond memories. The columbarium will be decorated with lights, cyclamens, and poinsettias and the walkway to the columbarium will be illuminated with luminaries to lead the way to the event. We hope that everyone will be able to join us for this first-time event.

## **OFFERING ENVELOPES**

If you turned in a pledge card, you can pick up your offering envelopes in the Fellowship Hall on Sundays.

## **SANCTUARY FLOWERS**

Sponsoring the Sanctuary floral arrangement for a Sunday worship service is a beautiful way to celebrate an occasion or honor your loved ones. Your personal dedication will be published in the worship bulletin on the Sunday of your sponsorship. There is a \$35 donation to the Flower Fund to sponsor an arrangement.

Sign up for a 2024 Sunday in the Fellowship Hall. You will be contacted the week prior to your Sunday to arrange wording for the bulletin. Your check must be received in the church office the week prior to your Sunday.

## **THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU!**

Many thanks to all who made pledges as part of this year's stewardship campaign. So far, we have 91 pledges of time, talent and funds for 2024. We still have not reached our goal of 10% more pledges than last year so REMEMBER IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO PLEDGE. We hope that some of you who have forgotten or were waiting to make your pledge will still show your commitment to Central by submitting a pledge soon. 91 pledges sounds like a good number, but we have at least twice as many active members. There is still time, and it is never too late. If you want a pledge card, they are available in the pews at church, in the narthex when you enter the church building, at the church office or from Dick Edelstein (209 351-5857). Again, MANY THANKS to all who have pledged. "You Rock."

**END OF THE YEAR GIVING** - If you are in a position to make an additional 2023 gift, we invite you to do so by December 31. In order to claim a charitable contribution deduction for 2023 pledge/donation checks must be delivered by or be postmarked by December 31, 2023.

## **BOOK GROUP**

The Book group met Dec. 10th for another informative discussion. The current read is *River Sing Me Home* by Eleanor Shearer - a mother's gripping journey to find her stolen children in the aftermath of slavery. Next discussion date is Jan. 7, 2024.

### MARK YOUR CALENDAR

The Chili Cook off featuring Snap Jackson and the Knock on Wood Players returns to the Fellowship Hall Sunday, January 28 at noon. Tickets go on sale soon. Watch for more information in the coming days.

### 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.

### FOOD PANTRY

The food pantry shelves are getting bare. We are serving 10-12 homeless people per week, and I expect that to go up as the weather gets colder and wetter. Here are some guidelines to help you pick items for the closet. ***Everything needs to be no cook items!*** The people we serve do not have access to cooking facilities or can openers or refrigerator space. ***Please do not empty your cupboards or fridge or give us anything that is expired, legally we can't use it. We rarely serve families and we direct them to the Emergency Food Bank. Sometimes the cheapest and easiest way to get these items is to go through Amazon!***

Here are our immediate needs:

Tuna (with a pull tab to open or packets of tuna that can be easily opened.)

Water bottles 16 oz. size

juice (apple, orange) small sizes

canned soups (with pull tabs that can be opened and eaten without water or heat.)

Vienna Sausage with pull tabs

Raisins, small boxes

milk (shelf stable, small sizes)

Cereal individual servings

Pudding cups in any flavor

Cup O' Noodles or something similar

If you have any packets of utensils with napkins that they hand out in some fast-food places, we can use those too!

Thank you so much! This congregation is so compassionate.

Dianne England, food closet organizer