

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP

4th Sunday after the Epiphany

Sunday, January 28, 2024



*Indicates please stand as you are able.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Monica Adams

GATHERING MOMENT

Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)

Leader: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

All: **Lord, hear our prayers.**

Leader: The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

All: **Amen.**

*HYMN

Be Thou My Vision

UMH #451

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Martha Shuemake

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

Susan Perez (8:30am)
Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)

***PASSING THE PEACE** Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)
(Stand, bow or wave, with the word "Peace be with You!")

All Sing: *Hymn of Promise* verse 1
In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree; in cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free! In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

SPECIAL MUSIC Snap Jackson & The Knock On Wood Players

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE Mark 1:21-28 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 35) Susan Perez (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)
All: Thanks be to God.

***HYMN** Healer of Our Every Ill TFWS #2213

SERMON "Jesus Throws a Demon Out" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (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 Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (11:00am)

OFFERTORY Snap Jackson & The Knock On Wood Players

***DOXOLOGY** *For the Beauty of the Earth* verse 6 UMH #92
*For thyself, best Gift Divine, to the world so freely given,
for that great, great love of thine, peace on earth, and joy in heaven:
Lord of all, to thee we raise this our hymn of grateful praise.*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION Susan Perez (8:30am), Ronesha Jackson (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** Monica Adams

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee
Susan Perez (8:30am), Worship Leader
Ronesha Jackson (11:00am), Worship Leader
Martha Shuemade, Children's Moment
Ric Campero, Music Director
Monica Adams, Organist/Pianist
David Campero, Livestream
Mark Wharff & Steven Adams, Media
Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator
Rupert Cooper, Audio

1/28

"JESUS THROWS A DEMON OUT"

Mark 1:21-28

We have reflected on our conference vision statement, "Following Jesus, Thriving in Community, and Healing the World." We have talked about sacrifices and commitment (following Jesus), prayer and practice (thriving in community), and change of attitude and action (healing the world). We need to do all these to be partners of God's creating works. However, healing the world happens when God touches the world at the end.

Let us read the text for today. "Jesus and his followers went into Capernaum. Immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and started teaching. The people were amazed by his teaching, for he was teaching them with authority, not like the legal experts."

First Jesus taught the Bible. He was not just analyzing the texts and explaining them. Legal experts analyze the texts and explain them. They provided the historical background and context of it. Jesus, however, helped the audience to apply the text to their daily lives. Now, those texts are not remote teachings but the current guidelines for their daily decision-making process.

Suddenly, there in the synagogue, a person with an evil spirit screamed, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God."

The demons knew that Jesus came to destroy them! Why? Because Jesus made the world alive, and the demon possessed person felt threatened and cornered by Jesus. This happens when we live out the words of God. When we just hear it and understand it, demons feel comfortable. Demons say, "You can have all the Bible studies in the world. Just do not take any action. We are fine then." When we live out the words of God, however, demons are now invaded and threatened.

"Silence!" Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. "Come out of him!" The unclean spirit shook him and screamed, then it came out. Everyone was shaken and questioned among themselves, "What's this? A new teaching with authority! He even commands unclean spirits and they obey him!" Right away the news about him spread throughout the entire region of Galilee.

Why do we need to silence the evil spirit?

In the intricate tapestry of the Bible, demons and evil spirits emerge as malevolent entities diametrically opposed to the divine, weaving tales of temptation, affliction, and chaos. Within the biblical texts, demons emerge as cunning seducers, enticing humanity to deviate from the righteous path ordained by God. The best example is in Genesis 3: 1-3:

Now the serpent was craftier than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You must not eat from any tree in the garden’?” **Satan twisted the word of God and planted a seed of doubt.**

The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, ‘You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and **you must not touch it**, or you will die.’” The woman also added the phrase, “you must not touch it” to the original command **to make it sound harsher than what God said.**

Evil spirit delivers God’s message 99% correct and put 1% addition or deduction. That is the typical make up of heresy. That is why we need to know the words of God and meditate on it to get the true meaning of them.

“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman. “For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” **Finally, the serpent misrepresented God’s character and distorted God’s intention.**

That is why Jesus said, “Silence!” to the demons. They always try to slightly twist the words of others and misrepresent the characters of others and distort the intention of others. We know that slander is one of the sins. The best way to avoid such sin is not to talk about another person without the person present. Without giving the person an opportunity to explain what he or she meant was a sin. In the court of law, hearsay is not allowed as evidence. That is biblical.

The New Testament Gospels illuminate many stories of demonic possession, where malevolent spirits grip individuals, inflicting both physical and mental torment. Jesus, Son of God engaged in exorcisms to liberate the possessed. The afflicted bear witness to diverse symptoms—seizures, blindness, and even the loss of speech—as manifestations of otherworldly influence.

Demons, entwined with the cosmic order, are woven into narratives of disorder and misfortune. The tale of Job stands as a poignant example, illustrating the depths of suffering orchestrated by these malevolent beings. They serve as willing minions, perpetuating the opposition to both God and humanity, leaving a trail of chaos in their wake.

In exploring these nuanced depictions, the Bible unveils a complex cosmology of malevolence, where demons play multifaceted roles as agents of temptation, harbingers of affliction, and instruments of chaos. 1 Samuel shows that the King Saul was tortured by evil spirit, mostly jealousy and anxiety.

However, demons sometimes work in a more subtle way. They are not named evil spirits. For example, King David was tempted by the evil spirit of sexual desire and power control. In delving into the realm of demons and malevolent spirits, the diversity of perceptions mirrors the kaleidoscope of beliefs surrounding celestial entities. Much like the multifaceted image of angels, our understanding of demons takes shape through the lens of our supernatural convictions.

Unraveling the Complexities of Demons in the Mind

The quintessential image of a demon, adorned with horns, crimson skin, and a menacing demeanor, continues to wield influence over the American psyche. Rooted in medieval demonology and echoed in vintage horror films, this visual persists as a haunting archetype. However, the contemporary demon assumes a more elusive and insidious form. It thrives as an unseen force, manipulating from the shadows, whispering doubts and fears, or materializing in enigmatic phenomena like unexplained noises and flickering lights.

For some people, demons transcend the external, symbolizing internal struggles and temptations. Vices, addictions, and negative thoughts become personified adversaries, engaged in an ongoing battle within us. Narratives of Jesus' exorcisms and divine interventions showcase a powerful force capable of overcoming evil and shielding adherents. The dichotomy between those vulnerable to demonic sway and those resilient against

temptation serves as a poignant reminder of the imperative to lead a virtuous life, anchored in the grace of the divine.

Conversely, for others, demons metamorphose into symbols of societal injustices—systematic racism, discrimination, gun violence, corporate greed, and oppression. Amidst the presence of these malevolent forces, the Bible, in its overarching narrative, affirms God's ultimate triumph over darkness. The promise of eternal life beckons to those who choose to follow the divine path, even in the face of societal demons.

In parsing the complexities of demons within the mind, these divergent interpretations coalesce, underscoring the intricate interplay between belief systems, morality, and the eternal struggle for righteousness in a world fraught with both internal and external adversities.

Unveiling the Complex Dance with Demons: Navigating Power, Psychology, and Faith

In contemplating the notion of "casting out demons," the terrain shifts when we enter the realm of modern psychology and psychotherapy. These disciplines, grounded in empirical evidence and established therapeutic methodologies, grapple with mental health concerns without resorting to supernatural or religious paradigms.

However, intriguing parallels emerge between the concept of "demons" and certain mental health experiences in psychological frameworks:

The metaphorical interpretation of "demons" aligns with internalized struggles—negative thoughts and self-limiting beliefs that hinder personal growth. Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and evidence-based approaches parallel the concept of "casting out demons," helping individuals challenge and replace detrimental thought patterns.

Therapeutic techniques like CBT facilitate the identification and confrontation of negative thought patterns, mirroring the biblical notion of confronting and overcoming internalized struggles.

Trauma or overwhelming experiences may manifest as dissociative symptoms, akin to misconceptions of possession or demonic influence. Trauma-focused therapy and dissociation-specific approaches serve as means to understand and integrate fragmented experiences, fostering healing and control over one's mental state.

Acknowledging the individuality of mental health experiences, mental health professionals tailor personalized assessments and treatment plans. While diverging from a literal interpretation of demons, therapeutic approaches aim to guide individuals towards reclaiming inner peace and control.

In both psychological and spiritual realms, Jesus serves as a healer through diverse methodologies. The common objective—empowering individuals to manage mental health challenges, enhance well-being, and lead fulfilling lives—unites the fields of psychology, psychotherapy, and faith.

Extending this metaphor to societal demons, the quest becomes one of empowerment and liberation from injustices and oppression. A paradigm where individuals, like the liberated from Egypt, can emerge as decision-makers and masters of their destinies.

On January 17, Cleveland School Remembers had its 35th annual prayer vigil in our church fellowship hall. Many people came to testify to the evil working in our gun culture. I talked to some people, asking whether we can make gun possession illegal in our country. Many expressed doubts on that "extreme ideal" vision. I remember equal opportunity among black and white, men and women were all once "extreme ideal" vision. However, when we identified inequality as evil of our society and took baby steps, we are now in this society where we can worship together, work together, and live together as equal partners. I just wanted to plant a seed in some people's hearts.

Identifying and seeking divine help to overcome personal and societal demons becomes a transformative journey. Through collaboration with God, the biblical narrative becomes a beacon of hope and guidance for navigating both personal and communal struggles, offering a roadmap towards freedom from the intricate tapestry of demons that entwine our lives.

So, what are the demons that you are dealing with now? Whatever demons you are dealing with, have confidence in the final victory. Jesus came to heal us and to heal the whole universe. The movement is already in motion. We shall overcome all the injustices and oppressions. May God bless our efforts and steps toward the final victory!



WELCOME CENTER

If you are a visitor, please use this information for your convenience!

Sunday Schedule

- 8:30 am Worship Service at the Fireside Room in the Knoles Building in English
- 9:30 am Chancel Choir Rehearsal 9:30 am behind the Sanctuary choir room
- 10:15 am Worship Service at the Fireside Room in the Knoles Building in Cambodian language.
- 11:00 am Worship Service in the Sanctuary in English.
Childcare (under age 5) is available in the Knoles building. A friendly caregiver welcomes you!
Godly Play (leave 11 am service Following Children's Moment)

SAVE THE DATE! FEBRUARY 4

Sunday, February 4th, Jeffrey Hall, former Minister of Central (2013-2019) will be preaching at both the 8:30am and 11:00am services. Fellowship Hour to follow the 11:00am service.

OFFERING ENVELOPES

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

THE ANNUAL CHILI COOK-OFF IS HERE!

Come and join in on the fun at our Chili Cook-Off after the 11:00am service in the Fellowship Hall. Sample and vote on your favorite chilis provided by Central chefs! Listen to Snap Jackson perform and purchase raffle tickets or bid on an auction item.

SUNDAY AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP

The current book group read is *Where the Lost Wander* by Amy Harmon. In this epic and haunting love story set on the Oregon Trail, a family and their unlikely protector find their way through peril, uncertainty, and loss.

The next discussion date is Feb. 11th. Questions or comments contact Elaine jbtaxe@gmail.com.

LENT: A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND RENEWAL

Lent is a 40-day period of solemn observance in the Christian calendar that comes before Easter. It's a time for reflection, repentance, and spiritual growth, commemorating the 40 days Jesus spent fasting and being tempted in the wilderness before beginning his public ministry.

Lent is a time for Christians to prepare their hearts and minds for the celebration of Easter, the holiest day in the

Christian calendar. It's a reminder of Jesus' sacrifice and a call to follow his teachings. By taking time for reflection, repentance, and renewal, Christians can deepen their faith and prepare for the joy of Easter.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14th, and ends on Holy Saturday, March 28th, the day before Easter Sunday.

There are many ways Christians observe Lent, but some common practices include:

Prayer and reflection: Christians may spend more time in prayer and meditation, attending special church services, and reading scripture.

Fasting and abstinence: Many Christians choose to give up something they enjoy, such as meat, sweets, or social media, as a way to focus on their spiritual life. Others may choose to fast from food or drink for certain periods.

Almsgiving: Lent is a time to remember those in need and to practice generosity. Christians may donate to charity, volunteer their time, or perform acts of kindness for others.

Our church offers Adult Education Study (9:45-10:45 AM, Knoles Building Rm 6) and Small Group Bible Study (After 11 AM Worship, Fellowship).

NEW CHURCH DIRECTORY LAUNCHED ONLINE

Our new Church Online Directory is now up and running. It includes contact information for everyone who completed the questionnaire and requested that they be included in the directory. Hopefully it will be a handy tool for communicating with other church members and friends. There is even an app for your phone that allows you to access the directory anytime and anywhere.

The directory does not currently include everyone since we need your permission to be included. The directory is only accessible by other church members and requires a password to use. If you did not sign up to be in the directory but would like to be included, contact Dick Edelstein and he can add you to the directory database. You can also contact Dick if you need assistance in accessing and using the directory: email: <mailto:richardj15@me.com> phone (209) 351-5857.

Dick will also be available after the 11:00 am service on January 28th and February 4th.

INTERFAITH TEA

Feb. 15, 2024 1:00pm at Stockton Buddhist Church

There will be 12 hosted tea tables at the interfaith tea following the 1:00pm service. Many thanks to those who have offered help. I could use 1 more person to make tea sandwiches & another batch of cookies would be a bonus.

Please contact Elaine Bradbury call/text 209-470-7382. The donations from the tea will go to Family Promise of San Joaquin County and STAND (Stocktonians Taking Action to Neutralize Drugs)

SAVE THE DATE: FEBRUARY 29TH 2024!

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