

# Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

**ORDER OF WORSHIP**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Lent  
**Sunday, February 25, 2024**



\*Indicates please stand as you are able.

## GATHERING

<b>PRELUDE</b>		Monica Adams
<b>GATHERING MOMENT</b>		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
<b>INTROIT</b>	<i>We Have Come To Worship The Lord</i>	Chancel Choir
<b>*CALL TO WORSHIP</b>		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
	Leader: You who fear the Lord, praise him!	
	All: <b>For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one.</b>	
	Leader: God has listened to their cry for help.	
	All: <b>They will proclaim God's righteousness. The Lord has done it! Amen.</b>	
<b>*HYMN</b>	<i>Jesus Walked that Lonesome Valley</i>	TFWS #2112
<b>CHILDREN'S MOMENT</b>		Martha Shuemaker
<b>MISSION &amp; MINISTRIES MOMENT</b>		Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)
<b>PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED</b>		
<b>RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS</b>		Alexis Easton (8:30am) Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

**\*PASSING THE PEACE**

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

(Stand, bow or wave, with the word "Peace be with You!")

**All Sing:**

*Sweet, Sweet Spirit*

UMH #334

***There's a sweet sweet spirit in this place and I know that it's the spirit of the Lord.  
There are sweet expressions on each face and I know that it's the presence of the Lord.***

**ANTHEM**

*Be Thou My Vision*  
(Arr. Dan Forrest)

Chancel Choir

**PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE**

**SCRIPTURE**

Mark 8:31-38 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 44)

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**

*Down by the Jordan*

W&P #3045

***Down by the Jordan, a prophet named John was baptizing,  
preaching a message the people found bold and surprising.***

***"God will forgive! Show that you'll change how you live!***

***Surely God's new day is rising!"***

***There by the river, the crowd came with great expectation:***

***"Are you God's Chosen One, sent here to rescue our nation?"***

***"No!" John replied. "He who is mightier than I***

***judges and offers salvation."***

***Jesus, you went to be baptized along with the others,  
taking your place among sinners, God's lost sons and daughters.***

***Then with great love, God's Spirit came as a dove!***

***Your work began in those waters.***

***Here in the Church, we are baptized and filled with God's Spirit.***

***Freed and forgiven we're welcomed with joy! Can you hear it?***

***This is God's sign! This is how God says, "You're mine!"***

***Let's take the good news and share it!***

**SERMON**

"Take Up Your Cross and Follow Me!"

Rev. Sungho Lee

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

**LENTEN PRAYER**

During this Lent, we pray not only for the Palestinians but also for the Israelis because they are both God's children. Last week, we prayed for the Palestinians and this week we pray for the Israelis. May God bring peace in the Gaza area and among all the nations in the region.

**Oh, Almighty God, we humbly beseech You as we gather in Your presence. Our hearts ache with the cries of the families of the hostages, whose loved ones have been forcibly taken by the hands of terror, torn from the sanctity of their homes, their cherished gatherings, and the warmth of their communities.**

**Grant solace to the hearts of those who anxiously await the return of their dear ones. Extend Your guiding hand, O Merciful God, to lead these hostages back into the embrace of their families. May Your light shine upon their path, guiding them safely home. Amen.**

**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**

*He's Got the Whole World*  
(Emma Lou Diemer)

**\*DOXOLOGY**

*Bless Thou the Gifts*

UMH #587

*Bless thou the Gifts our hands have brought; bless thou the work our hearts have planned.  
Ours is the faith, the will, the thought; the rest, O God, is in thy hand.*

**PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Alexis Easton (8:30am), Jeni Bonilla (11:00am)

**SENDING FORTH**

**\*BENEDICTION**

Rev. Sungho Lee

**\*RESPONSE**

Spirit Song

UMH #347

*O let the Son of God enfold you with his Spirit and his love,  
let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.  
O let him have the things that hold you, and his Spirit like a dove  
will descend upon your life and make you whole.*

**\*POSTLUDE**

Monica Adams

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**SERVING YOU TODAY**

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee  
Alexis Easton (8:30am), Worship Leader  
Jeni Bonilla (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

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**"Take up your cross and follow me!" (Mark 8:31-38)**

**The Certainty of Suffering: A Fundamental Truth**

In the grand tapestry of human existence, there exists one undeniable constant: suffering. Much like a football team cannot escape its adversaries on the field, so too are we unable to evade the trials and tribulations that pepper the journey of life.

Even Jesus, in his omniscient wisdom, foresaw and acknowledged the inevitability of suffering. As he imparted his teachings to his disciples, he prophesied his own path, a path fraught with rejection, persecution, and ultimately, crucifixion.

We, as mere mortals, must come to terms with the unassailable truth that suffering will find us. While we cannot peer into the crystal ball of our future, we can fortify ourselves to withstand the trials that lie ahead. Through preparation and resilience, we equip ourselves with the strength necessary to confront life's inevitable adversities.

Yet, in moments of despair and when our own strength falters, we find solace in the presence of Jesus, who walks alongside us, offering comfort and fortitude in the midst of our suffering. In his divine companionship, we discover the resilience to endure, knowing that we are not alone in our struggles.

### **Embracing the Promise of Resurrection**

In the realm beyond mortality, one certainty awaits: resurrection. This profound truth, articulated by Jesus himself, transcends earthly bounds and offers a beacon of hope amidst the shadows of death. With unwavering conviction, Jesus foretold his resurrection after three days, a declaration met with skepticism and disbelief, even from his closest disciples.

Peter, in a moment of doubt and fear, dared to challenge Jesus' proclamation of resurrection. Ἐπιτιμάω (Epitimaō): This verb, used by Peter, translates to "rebuke," "reprimand," or "forbid." It carries a sense of silencing or stopping someone from doing something considered wrong or inappropriate. Here, Peter attempts to silence Jesus from saying what Peter deems an unacceptable prediction.

His rebuke stemmed from a lack of faith in the possibility of life beyond the grave. Unable to comprehend the divine plan unfolding before him, Peter sought to silence Jesus, clinging to his own vision of earthly glory and power.

Yet, Jesus remained steadfast in his purpose, resolute in his conviction that resurrection would follow death. His voluntary sacrifice upon the cross was not the end, but rather the beginning of a profound spiritual truth that would reshape humanity's understanding of life and death.

For those who embrace the promise of resurrection, death loses its sting and despair gives way to hope. Jesus, in his resurrection, offers a new perspective on the transient nature of earthly existence, inviting all who believe to transcend the limitations of mortal life and glimpse the eternal truths that lie beyond.

In a world plagued by uncertainty and fear, the certainty of resurrection offers solace and reassurance. It is a reminder that death is not the final chapter, but rather a gateway to new beginnings and endless possibilities. In embracing this truth, we discover a profound sense of purpose and meaning that transcends the fleeting concerns of this world.

### **Unmasking Satan's Deception**

In the Bible, with the resolute words, "Get behind me, Satan," Jesus unveils the insidious nature of opposition to God's divine plan, casting light on the obstacles that hinder the fulfillment of his mission. Jesus said, Ὕπαγε ὀπίσω μου, Σατανᾶ (Hypage opisō mou, Satana) "Get behind me" or "Depart from me" Satan, which means "adversary" or "opponent." By calling Peter "Satan," Jesus is highlighting how Peter's rebuke opposes God's plan and acts as an obstacle to his mission.

Satan, the eternal adversary, employs a cunning strategy to deceive humanity, convincing us that earthly existence is the pinnacle of life. Yet, we must not succumb to this illusion. Just as the disappointment of losing one Super Bowl does not signify the end of all victories, so too does death not signal the cessation of life. Beyond the veil of mortality lies the promise of resurrection and a new existence.

Armed with this profound truth, fear of death loses its grip, empowering individuals to embrace noble causes with unwavering courage. Throughout history, towering figures such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. exemplified this courage, risking their lives in pursuit of justice and equality.

Contrary to misconceptions, belief in eternal life does not diminish the significance of the present. Rather, it emboldens believers to tirelessly labor in the service of building God's kingdom on earth. Those who embrace this truth are infused with a transformative courage that transcends earthly limitations, striving to manifest divine principles in the here and now.

Conversely, societies devoid of belief in eternal life often falter in their quest for justice and equality. The failed experiments of communist regimes serve as cautionary tales, illustrating the perils of attempting to construct utopian societies without reverence for transcendent truths.

### **The Divergent Paths of Ideals: Communism vs. Christianity**

At first glance, the communist and Christian movements may appear to share common ground in their aspirations for a society founded on principles of equality and dignity for all. Both envision a community where basic human needs—shelter, food, healthcare, and meaningful work—are met with fairness and compassion.

However, the way these ideals are pursued diverges dramatically. While communism often resorts to coercion and seizure of property, the essence of the Christian message is one of radical generosity and self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ exemplified this ethos by willingly surrendering his life for the sake of humanity.

In stark contrast to the violent upheavals associated with communist revolutions, the Jesus movement advocated for a transformative approach rooted in love and solidarity. Rather than seizing possessions, followers were encouraged to share what they had with others, mirroring Jesus' own selflessness on the cross.

The interaction between Jesus and Peter underscores the complexities of faith and the tension between human expectations and divine purpose. Despite Peter's initial proclamation of faith, he struggled to grasp the profound sacrifice inherent in Jesus' teachings—a struggle emblematic of the human condition itself.

### **Take up your own cross and follow me.**

Yet, Jesus' call to take up one's cross and follow him transcends mere symbolism; it demands a radical reorientation of priorities and a willingness to relinquish worldly attachments in pursuit of a higher purpose. This ethos stands in direct opposition to the materialistic ethos of those who prioritize personal gain over collective well-being.

Contrary to Karl Marx's assertion that faith in eternal life breeds complacency, history bears witness to the transformative power of such faith. Those who believe in the promise of eternal life have demonstrated a remarkable capacity for courage and selflessness, often risking their lives to advance the cause of justice and righteousness.

Those who believe only in this life and material resources did not hesitate to kill others and take possessions of others. They do not want to sacrifice their own time, talents, and treasure. They want others to give up their time, talents, and treasure.

During the season of Lent, let us reflect on the sacrifices we are called to make in service of a better world—a world guided by the principles of compassion, justice, and solidarity. For it is through such sacrifices that we lay the groundwork for a future imbued with hope and dignity, both in this life and beyond. May God be with us in this work! Amen!

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# CONNECTIONS



## 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)

## LUNCH ON US

Are you a senior and interested In: A grab-and-go meal? A sit-down meal with other seniors? Join the Lunch on Us Committee Wednesday, February 28 from noon-1.00pm for a meal that you can either eat with others in the Fellowship Hall or take with you. The menu this month includes ravioli, salad, french bread and refreshments. Bring a friend if you like.

If you plan to attend, please let Alan Cook know by email ([alancook4138@gmail.com](mailto:alancook4138@gmail.com)) or sign up this Sunday. This will help us plan, and a limited amount of food will be available at the event.

This project is part of the Missions Committee. Funding is from the Isaiah Partnership/Princeton Theological Seminary and by donations made to the Christmas offering.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Join us for a special event on March 16th, Saturday, from 9 AM to Noon: our Leadership Summit! It's a time to gather and delve into our mission and ministry priorities. You won't want to miss the opportunity to hear about the exciting initiatives each committee is undertaking and planning for the future. Save the date and be part of this important conversation!

## GREETINGS, BELOVED MEMBERS OF OUR CONGREGATION!

Do you find joy in the magic of cinema? Join us for an enriching opportunity to share and explore the spiritual dimensions of film within a community of fellow believers. Just as our book club delves into the depths of literature, our Movie Club seeks to engage in thoughtful discussions surrounding movies and their significance to our Christian journey.

If you're eager to be part of a small group of movie enthusiasts, we warmly invite you to sign up! Together, we'll select films that resonate with our faith and gather to unpack their themes, messages, and insights.

Let's embark on this cinematic adventure together! The Movie Group will meet after church in the fellowship room to discuss the time and movie.

## LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

As we approach the sacred season of Lent, we extend an invitation to deepen our spiritual understanding through the study of God's Word. Join us for a series of four intimate small group Bible study sessions centered on the Book of Ruth.

If you're eager to delve into the timeless wisdom and profound narratives of Ruth, we encourage you to sign up

for this enlightening journey. Together, we'll explore the themes, lessons, and relevance of Ruth's story to our lives as modern-day disciples.

Let us come together in fellowship and exploration of Scripture. Sign up today to reserve your place in this meaningful Lenten Bible study experience.

Lenten Bible Study will meet after church in the fellowship room to discuss the time and place.

### **SUNDAY MORNING ADULT CLASS**

Central's Sunday morning Adult Class continues this week. *Wrestling with Doubt, Finding Faith*, is a video series by United Methodist pastor Adam Hamilton. We'll explore questions that often trouble thoughtful Christians. Hamilton takes the questions seriously and responds in ways many will find helpful. We'll listen to Hamilton, and then we'll share how we've felt about these matters. We hope you'll join us Sundays at 9:45 a.m. in Knoles, Room 6.

### **SUNDAY BOOK GROUP**

The book group is reading *The Women's March* by Jennifer Chiaverini. This is a novel of the 1913 Woman Suffrage Procession (a crucial but little-remembered moment in American history). Discussion date - March 17th.

### **PRAYER SHAWLS NEEDED!**

Calling all crocheters and knitters! The need for shawls has been great in the past several months so our stock of prayer shawls has dwindled. If you feel the call to provide a shawl to our ministry, please consider making one. All it takes is 3 skeins of soft acrylic yarn, size 10.5 knitting needles or N-13 crochet hook. Once completed bring to church and we will get them blessed and packaged for delivery. For any questions, please email or call Linda Newhall 209-601-9239, [L.brackin@comcast.net](mailto:L.brackin@comcast.net).

### **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 14<sup>th</sup>, and ends on Holy Saturday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 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 (9:45-10:45am, Knoles Building Rm 6) and Small Group Bible Study (After 11:00am Worship, Fellowship).