

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP
5th Sunday of Lent
Sunday, March 17, 2024



*Indicates please stand as you are able.

GATHERING

PRELUDE

Jesus Loves Me
(based on Clair de Lune) (Wm Bradbury, Claude Debussy, arr. Fred Bock)

Monica Adams

GATHERING MOMENT

Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

INTROIT

The Lord Is in This Holy Temple
(by Lloyd Larson)

Chancel Choir

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

Leader: We are here this morning to meet our siblings in Christ.

All: **To talk together, to share our lives together with people who listen and care.**

Leader: We are here this morning to meet ourselves.

All: **To reflect within, to enjoy the sounds of our own voices and the workings of our own minds.**

Leader: We are here today to meet with God.

All: **To pray, to listen to communicate through worship our thanks and praise for God's loving contact with us. So let us worship with gratitude and gladness the God who draws us together.**

*HYMN

The Summons

TFWE #2130

CHILDREN'S MOMENT

Rev. Sungho Lee

MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT

Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS

Joe Krider (11:00am)

***PASSING THE PEACE** Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (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 *Create In Me* Chancel Choir
by John Purifoy

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE John 12:20-33 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 106) Susan Perez (8:30am)
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God. Joe Krider (11:00am)
All: **Thanks be to God.**

***HYMN** *Make Me a Channel of Your Peace* TFWS #2171

SERMON "Die and Bear Fruits!" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (11:00am)

LENTEN PRAYER

Many people want us to take sides. However, we do not take side with any one political side. We will pray for all. We will pray for those who have no alternative means to speak their voices.

Lord, deliver us from those powerful people who do not care for our lives. Many innocent people die from both Palestine side and Israel side. The leaders insist on their own plans and care for their positions of power. Help them to repent their sins and stop holding innocent lives as hostages for their political ambitions. Let all those innocent lives live! Hear our prayers!

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), Joe Krider (11:00am)

OFFERTORY *Voluntary in F* Monica Adams
(John Bennett)

***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 Susan Perez (8:30am), Joe Krider (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.
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.
Jesus, O Jesus, come and fill your lambs.*

***POSTLUDE**

Toccata in E minor
(J. Pachelbel)

Monica Adams

SERVING YOU TODAY

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

Sermon in a nutshell: "DIE AND BEAR FRUITS!" (John 12:20-33)

Paradoxes in Christian doctrine

In Christian doctrine, one encounters a rich interplay of paradoxes. The Bible often presents us with seemingly contradictory truths: the Kingdom of God is both here and still yet to come; we are sinners yet children of God; and we are justified while still striving towards perfection.

This dual status of the Christian life is akin to a complex symphony, where synchronous melodies coalesce within an asynchronous framework. It is a narrative woven with threads of time, where past, present, and future converge in a holistic continuum.

Consider, for instance, the analogy of a royal heir. Born into nobility, the status of prince or princess is conferred at birth, yet the refinement and comportment befitting royalty must be cultivated through learning and experience. Similarly, in our spiritual journey, a part of our old self must perish to make way for the emergence of a new self. It is a perpetual cycle of transformation and growth, an ongoing pursuit of perfection.

Life is a process of dying and rebirth

Indeed, this dual status is not merely black and white, but a spectrum of shades. It encompasses the tension between our earthly existence and our heavenly aspirations, the tension between the already and the not yet. It is within this tension that the essence of Christian faith is found—a dynamic interplay of grace and striving, of divine decree and human endeavor.

Jesus summarized it in a succinct way: "I assure you that unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it can only be a single seed. But if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their lives will lose them, and those who hate their lives in this world will keep them forever."

The biblical meaning of death and eternal life

What do we need to die? Nothing. We are dying since the time we were born. If this is the case, why do we need to die? What does it mean that we need to hate our lives in this world to live forever?

I have a mentally ill son. He tried to end his life a couple times, visited psychiatrists and mental hospitals. He was prescribed pills and therapies. He has spent about ten years of his 20s in this darkness. Then this year, he applied to the University of Pacific and received an admission letter. It is like a miracle to me and my wife. I give thanks to all who have prayed for our family, especially for my son, Hozeh.

Some may wonder what happened? I and my wife also had the same question. We do not have an answer, but we have a clue. Last year, my mother-in-law, my wife's mother, was seriously ill. We thought that she might pass away. So, we visited her in Korea with my son. My son came along with us with hesitation. When he met grandmother, however, he felt the unconditional love of the grandmother. Grandmothers, as you all know, do not have any criticism, judgements, or questionable looks for their grandchildren. She just loved him and complemented him. She wanted to share every food with him. She was so proud of him in his not so good conditions, looks, and responses. She could not help but smile and be happy to see him!

My son's attitude has slowly changed after the visit to Korea. We have noticed that, and he was willing to read the Upper Room daily devotional with my wife every evening. And he prayed with her. Something happened to him!

When I think about the biblical passage for today, my mother-in-law was dying and she made my son live. Dying in this sense is not a physical death. She did not argue, claim, insist anything but she just loved my son. I remember that I tried to show the right ways to my son, tried to correct him with good intentions but nothing worked. Then grandmother happened. I realize that grandmother's love is the meaning of death in the Bible. When we do not have our personal agenda, ego, criteria to judge others, we are dead in the biblical sense. Then we can live together.

When we do not judge others with our theological standards, we can live with other Christians and with non-Christians. This is the meaning of dying in Christ biblically speaking. The real question is, then, "Are you able and willing to die?"

Lenten Challenge

Even Jesus had hard times to accept his death. Jesus said, "Now I am deeply troubled. What should I say? 'Father, save me from this time'? No, for this is the reason I have come to this time. Father, glorify your name!"

I do not believe that dying is easy for any of us. I know, however, only when we die, we can live together. When we put the glory of God first, we can die. This is a challenge that we need to face during this Lenten season.

When Jesus prayed to God, a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard and said, "It's thunder." Others said, "An angel spoke to him." Jesus replied, "This voice wasn't for my benefit but for yours. Now is the time for judgment of this world. Now this world's ruler will be thrown out. When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw everyone to me." He said this to show how he was going to die.

God-Jesus-Holy Spirit work together to save us, you and me. Trinity was like my mother-in-law, who was delighted to see her grandson. God sees us and shares unconditional love for us. In the world with full of criticism, opposition, and judgement, this is the only place where we can feel unconditional love of God. God's unconditional love cures us. However, it is not priceless. Jesus paid the price. And he asked us to follow him.

Small Practical Test

Let us try out some small practical tests. When we have a committee meeting, let us try to bite out our tongues when we want to say something not nice. We may feel that we are dying. However, we will live forever! When

we want to reply to some emails with our harsh responses, let us just respond with simple saying like “Thank you for sharing this with me!” Or “Thank you for your advice!” Sometimes I kill others with my words written and spoken. However, when I refrain from saying or writing some things, I can live forever with others!

It would be hard because we have our own habits. However, we can teach new tricks to old dogs. In the annals of history, remarkable tales often lie dormant, awaiting discovery to blossom anew. Such is the case with the ancient date palm seeds unearthed from the depths of King Herod's palace on Masada, Israel, during excavations spanning 1963 to 1965. Encased within an old jar, these seeds lay dormant for millennia, their story suspended in time. Radiocarbon dating later revealed their antiquity, tracing their origin to a bygone era between 155 BC and 64 CE.

In 2005, researchers embarked on a daring experiment to test the viability of these millennia-old seeds. To their astonishment, some of the seeds sprouted, defying the boundaries of time and nature. Thus, the extinct Judean date palms, long thought consigned to history, were resurrected, breathing life into ancient botanical lineage.



In the realm of spirituality, parallels abound. Just as a seed lies dormant until planted, so too do the teachings of faith await action to bear fruit. The words of Jesus resonate across millennia, urging followers to serve and follow, promising honor to those who heed the call.

Let us practice dying this week and the weeks following until Easter. If you want, I recommend you try fasting from emails for two weeks. You all know the saying, “If you cannot say things nicely, do not say anything.” However, try fasting from social media posting. Instead, take time to pray for others and yourself.

If you feel that you are dying to write something, that is the testing time. I want us to grow older to be grandfather and grandmother who practice unconditional love, not only for their grandchildren but for all human beings.

May God bless us and help us to practice paradox of death and life! Amen.

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)

Wednesday Nights

- 7:00 pm 3700Yth Group in the Youth Rooms upstairs in the Knoles Building.

CONNECTIONS



GOOD FRIDAY WORSHIP SERVICE
March 29, 2024

6:30PM SANCTUARY

EASTER SUNDAY
March 31, 2024

6:30am • SUNRISE SERVICE • Columbarium

10:15am • CAMBODIAN WORSHIP SERVICE • Fireside Room

11:00am • EASTER WORSHIP SERVICE • Sanctuary

NO 8:30AM SERVICE

SUNDAY BOOK GROUP

The book group will meet today after the 11:00am to discuss the book *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). The book reveals a lot about the fight for women's rights. Again, without reading the book, a lot to be learned from the history and facts that will be discussed. Meet for lunch about 12:30 in the conference room.

PARENTS GROUP

Join us for community and fellowship and support on the incredible journey of parenthood. Please sign up below and we will send you a reminder of our monthly call. Our plan is to meet the Third Tuesday of every month from 8:00-9:00 pm on zoom. For questions, please call or text Jennifer Robles at 209-969-2935

Link to google form to sign up for reminders:

<https://forms.gle/QYsJSorcs9BkqxzN7>

WOULD YOU CONSIDER?

The Missions Committee is undertaking a search to recruit a person to take Dianne England's place as Angel Tree Coordinator.

If you are interested in learning more about this position, contact Alan Cook (alancook4138@gmail.com). If you are interested in helping with this program but do not want to serve as coordinator let Alan know of your interests.

SUNDAY MORNING ADULT CLASS

The Sunday Morning Adult Class, *Wrestling With Doubt, Finding Faith, concludes this Sunday*. Our six-week class has held some engaging discussions on some of the questions that may trouble thoughtful Christians. This week's topic: "Why Do the Innocent Suffer." We'd love to have you join us. We meet in Knoles Room 6 at 9:45 Sunday morning.

Thanks to Alexis Easton , John Bradbury, Becky Cameron and Alan England for facilitating the discussions.

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.

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.

EASTER FLOWER FUND

Be a part of our worship services on Easter by honoring or remembering a family member or a friend by making a \$20 donation to the Easter Flower Fund. This loving tribute is a meaningful way to remember a loved one's legacy or to recognize a special person in your life.

*Yes, I / we would like to donate an Easter plant / flower to help decorate the Sanctuary and Fireside Room for Easter Worship Service. **DEADLINE: MARCH 26.***

In memory of _____

OR

In honor/celebration of _____

Given by _____

of Plants: _____ Amount \$ _____

Email _____

Please make checks payable to CUMC. Fill out this form and return it to the church office.

(Flowers may be picked up at 12:30pm on Easter Sunday)

