

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP

3rd Sunday of Lent

Sunday, March 3, 2024



*Indicates please stand as you are able.

GATHERING

PRELUDE	<i>Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child</i> [Emma Lou Diemer] <i>Spirit of God, Descend Upon My Heart</i> [Frederick Atkinson]	Monica Adams
GATHERING MOMENT		Laura Dinges
INTROIT	<i>The Lord Is In This Holy Place</i> [by Lloyd Larson]	Chancel Choir
*CALL TO WORSHIP	Leader: We recognize that we need to be cleansed by your spirit All: Cleanse us with your Holy Spirit! Leader: We are contaminated by materialism and commercialism. All: Help us to worship you! Leader: You are our God and we are your people! All: Make this sanctuary a house of prayer! Amen.	Laura Dinges
*OPENING HYMN	<i>Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather</i>	UMH #552
CHILDREN'S MOMENT		Mary Juarez Dalton
MISSION & MINISTRIES MOMENT		Laura Dinges
RITE OF FRIENDSHIP AND A SPECIAL WELCOME TO OUR VISITORS (11:00am)		Laura Dinges

***PASSING THE PEACE** Laura Dinges
(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 they feel the presence of the Lord.*

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

ANTHEM *Amazing Grace* Chancel Choir
[arr. by Bruce Stevenson]

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE John 2:13-22 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 93) Laura Dinges
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.
All: **Thanks be to God.**

***HYMN** *You are My All in All* W&S #3040

SERMON "Do Not Make God's House A Business Place" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Laura Dinges

PASTOR'S PRAYER Rev. Sungho Lee

LENTEN PRAYER

We need to remember that Jesus came to set the prisoners free.

Lord, we come before you with heavy hearts, burdened by the suffering of our Palestinian brothers and sisters as well as Israeli hostages. We lift up to you the worsening conditions faced by Palestinian prisoners and Israel hostages. We grieve for those denied access to basic necessities like water and bread, and for families torn apart. Help them to meet their families again in peace! In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS Laura Dinges

OFFERTORY *Aubade* Monica Adams
[Thomas Keesecker]

***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 Laura Dinges

COMMUNION

UMH #24-25 Laura Dinges
Leader: The Lord be with you.
People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Leader: It is right and a good and joyful thing...And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Sing: Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Leader: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ...And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Sing: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

Leader: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here...Through your Son Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, all honor and glory is yours, almighty Father, now and for ever.

Sing: Amen, amen, amen.

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.

COMMUNION HYMNS

You Satisfy the Hungry Heart

UMH #629

Take Our Bread

UMH #640

Spirit of the Living God

UMH #393

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

Prelude in D Major

Monica Adams

[J.K.F. Fischer]

The flowers on the altar today are given by Ceniza Japzon thanking God (on this day, March) for another year full of blessings, for good health, and happy days with my family and friends.

SERVING YOU TODAY

Rev. Dr. Sungho Lee

Laura Dinges, Worship Leader

Mary Juarez Dalton, Children's Moment

Ric Campero, Choir Director

Monica Adams, Organist/Pianist

David Campero, Livestream

Steven Adams, Media

Cherie Hudson, Facilities Coordinator

Rupert Cooper, Audio

SERMON IN A NUTSHELL: "DO NOT MAKE GOD'S HOUSE A BUSINESS PLACE."

(John 2:13-22) Pastor Lee

Jesus in Jerusalem at Passover

In the biblical narrative, Jesus is depicted as being present at the Jerusalem temple during the time of Passover. The significance of his presence in the temple during this festival can be understood within the context of Jewish religious practices and traditions.

As a devout Jewish man, Jesus adhered to the requirement of making pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem three times a year, as outlined in the scriptures. Passover, the first of these festivals, holds particular importance as it commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. It typically occurs in the spring season, coinciding with the barley harvest.

In the Bible, three major festivals called the **Shalosh Regalim** (Three Pilgrimage Festivals) mandated Jewish men to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem:

Passover (Pesach): Celebrating the Israelites' liberation from slavery in Egypt, it occurs in spring and coincides with the **barley harvest**.

Shavuot (Feast of Weeks): Commemorating the giving of the Torah (Five Books of Moses) at Mount Sinai, it takes place 49 days after Passover and aligns with the **wheat harvest**.

Sukkot (Feast of Booths): Marking the Israelites' wandering in the desert after their Exodus from Egypt, it falls in autumn and coincides with the **fruit harvest**.

The observance of Passover, along with the other festivals, was not solely focused on agricultural rituals; rather, it encompassed spiritual renewal, communal gathering, and the reaffirmation of the covenant between God and the Jewish people. Pilgrims from various regions would converge upon Jerusalem, bringing offerings to the temple and participating in sacred ceremonies. These occasions served as opportunities for worship, reflection, and communal rejoicing.

Why Jesus was mad at the people in the temple?

During the time leading up to the Jewish Passover, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. Upon arriving at the temple, he encountered a scene that displeased him greatly. Rather than finding a place of reverence and spiritual devotion, Jesus found the temple being used for commercial purposes. Merchants were selling animals for sacrifice and exchanging currency within the temple grounds.

Reacting with righteous indignation, Jesus took decisive action. He crafted a whip from ropes and proceeded to drive out the merchants and their livestock from the temple. He overturned the tables of the currency exchangers, scattering their coins. Addressing those selling doves, he admonished them, declaring, "Get these things out of here! Don't make my Father's house a place of business."

This incident reveals Jesus' deep concern for the sanctity of the temple and the purity of worship. He was angered by the commercialization of what should have been a sacred space dedicated to prayer and spiritual reflection. Instead of honoring the significance of the Passover as a time of spiritual renewal and connection with God, the people had turned it into a commercial enterprise.

In essence, Jesus was condemning the prioritization of material gain over spiritual matters. His actions underscored the importance of maintaining reverence and devotion in religious practices, rather than allowing them to be overshadowed by worldly concerns. This episode serves as a timeless reminder to prioritize the spiritual essence of religious observances over materialistic pursuits, a message that resonates even in contemporary society, where holidays like Christmas and Easter can become overshadowed by commercialism.

Let us cleanse our own temple!

In addressing the need to rectify the wrongdoing witnessed in the temple, Jesus provides a profound example of restoration and renewal. He emphasizes the importance of reviving genuine spiritual devotion and breathing life back into religious practices.

Drawing from the teachings of Jesus, we learn that the mere adherence to religious forms is insufficient; true significance lies in the transformative power these practices have on individuals and society as a whole. This sentiment echoes the words of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, who expressed concern not only for the survival of religious institutions but also for their impact on the wider community.

The dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish leaders further illuminates this theme. When questioned about the authority behind his actions, Jesus responds enigmatically, proclaiming that if the temple were destroyed, he would raise it up in three days. Although the leaders interpret his words literally, Jesus is referring metaphorically to his own body as the true temple.

In reflecting on this exchange, we recognize the need to undergo a spiritual transformation akin to the rebuilding of a temple. Just as Jesus spoke of raising up the temple of his body, we are called to cleanse our souls during the season of Lent, where the Holy Spirit dwells within us. By purifying our hearts and minds, we create a sacred space for the presence of God to flourish, enabling genuine spiritual growth and the bearing of fruits that reflect our faith.

In essence, Jesus' teachings compel us to move beyond mere ritualistic observance and instead cultivate a vibrant, living faith that impacts both our individual lives and the world around us. As we embark on this journey of spiritual renewal, may we heed the lessons of Jesus and strive to embody the true essence of religious devotion.

Sunday worship, etc.

Practical ideas include not only Sunday worship but others that are listed in the connection under the heading Lent like:

- **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.



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)

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!

The first movie night will be on Friday, March 15 at 5:30pm in the Fireside Room. **The movie: The Bank of Dave.**

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!

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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.