

Central United Methodist Church

3700 Pacific Avenue, Stockton, CA 95204

ORDER OF WORSHIP

5th Sunday after Easter

Sunday, May 5, 2024



*Indicates please stand as you are able.

GATHERING

PRELUDE	<i>The Water Is Wide</i> (Howard Helvey)	Monica Adams
GATHERING MOMENT		Laura Dinges
INTROIT	<i>O Praise God</i> (by Eric Thiman)	Chancel Choir
*CALL TO WORSHIP		Laura Dinges
Leader: There are many alternatives to our being here this morning.		
All: We have chosen to come into this place at this time, to involve ourselves in worship, to respond to the presence of God in our lives.		
Leader: There are innumerable false gods vying for our allegiance.		
All: We have chosen to love and honor the one true God, to offer ourselves as willing servants, to receive the empowerment of the Spirit. Amen.		
*OPENING HYMN	<i>Love Divine, All Loves Excelling</i>	UMH #384
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: *And God will raise you up on eagle's wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun, and hold you in the palm of God's hand.*

ANTHEM *As We Gather at the Table* Chancel Choir
(by K. Lee Scott)

PRAYER CARDS COLLECTED

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE

SCRIPTURE John 15:1-17 (Pew Bible NRSV, page 109) Laura Dinges
Leader: This is the word of God for the people of God.
All: Thanks be to God.

***HYMN** *The Gift of Love* UMH #408

SERMON "Love Each Other!" Rev. Sungho Lee

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Laura Dinges

PASTOR'S PRAYER Rev. Sungho Lee

THANKSGIVING

WORSHIP WITH OUR TITHES & OFFERINGS Laura Dinges

OFFERTORY *How Can I Keep from Singing* Monica Adams
(Howard Helvey)

***DOXOLOGY** *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* UMH #94

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
praise God, all creatures here below:
Alleluia! Alleluia!***

***Praise God, the source of all our gifts!
Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts!
Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!***

PRAYER OF DEDICATION Laura Dinges

COMMUNION

UMH #23-24 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

*Let Us Break Bread Together
For the Bread Which You Have Broken
Jesu, Jesu*

UMH #618

UMH #614

UMH #432

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

*Magnificat primi Toni
(Pachelbel)*

Monica Adams

The flowers on the altar are given by the Cooper family in memory of Rupert Cooper who passed away on April 23. His memorial service was yesterday.

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

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)
- 12:15 pm Fellowship Hour in the Fellowship Hall

Wednesday Nights

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

Sermon in a nutshell: "LOVE EACH OTHER!" (John 15:1-17)

We are called to bear fruits (LOVE).

We are resurrection people. Our divine mandate is to yield fruit, love. Echoing this sentiment, Jesus declared, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit."

In this profound proclamation, the interconnectedness between humanity, Jesus, and the divine is elucidated. God assumes the role of the cultivator, Jesus embodies the true vine, and we, in turn, are the branches. Our purpose is unequivocally defined: to bear fruit (love).

Too often, individuals assume the role of the vine-grower, endeavoring to shape and mold their own spiritual landscape. Yet, in the scriptural narrative, Jesus delineates our rightful position. We are not proprietors of vineyards, nor are we the vines themselves; rather, we are the branches. Our duty is singular: to bear fruit—fruit imbued with the essence of the Holy Spirit: joy, peace, love, patience, generosity, meekness, faithfulness, goodness, and self-control. These are all different aspects of love.

It is through our unwavering belief in Jesus and his resurrection that we attain this holistic character within ourselves and foster it within our community. When we believe in Jesus and his resurrection, we can have this wholistic character in ourselves and in our community. That is how we follow Jesus. We can love each other.

The fruit-bearing process is painful.

The cultivation of spiritual fruits, as elucidated by Jesus, is a process fraught with discomfort. "Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit," he proclaimed, a sentiment echoing the arduousness inherent in growth. "You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you," he added, underscoring the transformative power of divine guidance.

Embedded within our divine calling to bear the fruits of the Holy Spirit lies an expectation of pruning. Analogous to the meticulous care required in farming, cultivating spiritual virtues demands laborious effort—be it the pulling of weeds, the pruning of branches, or the application of nourishment. Our spiritual fruits do not ripen effortlessly; rather, they necessitate the diligent tending of a spiritual gardener. God employs various means to prune us, oftentimes through experiences that elicit discomfort and pain.

Indeed, personal growth demands sacrifice. It requires the discipline to temper one's temper, to curb one's greed, to nurture patience, and to embody the ethos of generous giving, sharing, and serving exemplified by Jesus. God's pruning shears are wielded through the trials, conflicts, and losses we encounter on life's journey—

a journey not merely for temporal gratification but one intended to prepare us for eternal communion with the divine and our fellow kin in God's realm.

Just as athletes endure rigorous training regimens in pursuit of championship glory, so too must we willingly endure the rigors of spiritual refinement to bear fruits worthy of our calling. The season of training lies before us, with the Holy Spirit assuming the role of trainer and guide. The pivotal question, then, is whether we comprehend the profundity of this process and willingly embrace its transformative power.

Do not give up in this process.

Amidst the crucible of challenges, perseverance is paramount. Despite the discomfort inherent in our spiritual refinement, steadfastness alongside Jesus is imperative. "Abide in me as I abide in you," Jesus implored, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between divine presence and human perseverance. "Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me," he elucidated, underscoring the indispensability of spiritual connectedness.

In the metaphorical vineyard of life, Jesus serves as the vine, while we are the branches. It is through this intimate union—our abiding in him and his abiding in us—that the fruits of spiritual growth are borne abundantly. "Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing," Jesus declared, emphasizing the futility of spiritual endeavors devoid of divine alignment.

The consequences of abandoning this sacred union are dire, as Jesus warned: "Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned." Indeed, those who sever themselves from the divine source of sustenance succumb to spiritual desiccation, succumbing to the allure of worldly vices and succumbing to the throes of despair.

Only through unwavering commitment to the path laid forth by Jesus can we weather the storms of temptation and emerge victorious, bearing fruits worthy of our calling. It is in the endurance of the journey, despite its trials and tribulations, that true spiritual abundance is realized.

Jesus promises our final victory!

In the promises of Jesus lies the assurance of our ultimate triumph. "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you," he declared. What a profound pledge of victory! Our Father is glorified when we bear abundant fruit and walk the path of discipleship.

When we abide in Jesus, our desires align with the will of God. We no longer seek what is contrary to God's plan; instead, our hearts beat in harmony with God's purpose. Consider the example of a loving parent and child: when the child understands the family's financial constraints and asks for assistance with discernment and wisdom, the parent gladly provides, trusting in their child's judgment. Likewise, when we are attuned to God's will, our requests are met with divine favor.

Let us take heart in this truth: when we are rooted in Christ, our prayers are not in vain. With unwavering faith, let us remain steadfast in God's words, cultivating lives marked by patience and perseverance. In doing so, we are transformed into disciples adorned with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Indeed, our transformation will be so profound that even those outside the church will take notice. Through our words and actions, we become living testimonies to the power and grace of our God. People will know that we are Christians because of our love. Let us embrace this journey of discipleship with patience and fortitude, knowing that with each step, we draw closer to the fulfillment of God's purpose in our lives.

We bear fruits (love) of the Holy Spirit to build such a community (caring community). Think about all the commandments in the Bible! It is for this community! Why do we need patience? Why do we need generosity and goodness? Why do we need self-control? We want to live together in this caring community!

We want to live together peacefully. God prunes us and disciplines us so that we can have life together as one family. Then our joy is complete. Our love is complete. We can have peace that the world cannot give. We can experience peace in this chaotic world.

May the Lord bless us abundantly as we walk this path of discipleship, and may our lives continually bring glory to His name. Amen.



TIME AND TALENT SURVEY

Please fill out the time and talent survey insert and send it to pastor Lee.

ONE DOWN, ONE TO GO!

The office needs a new office chair. If you are able to help financially, please let Susie Wanden know (swanden@cucmstockton.org). Thank you for your consideration.

SUNDAY BOOK GROUP

Here are the next 3 book titles the book group is excited to share. Discussion suggested following the order listed but subject to change per book availability.

1. *The Museum of Ordinary People* by Mike Gayle. Discussion June 2nd.
2. *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. Discussion TBD.
3. *Music and Mind* by Renee Fleming. Discussion TBD.

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>