



THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE

Shepherd of the Valley Evangelical Lutheran Church

1455 East Yosemite Avenue, Merced CA 95340 209-383-0632

Our Mission Statement: To be loving Christians, centered in God's Word and serving one's neighbor.

Our Vision Statement: Accepting people where they are and loving them as God does.

STAFF

Pastor John Russell-Curry
jrussellcurry@comcast.net

Administrative Assistant:
Carolyn Daberkow
shepherdofthevalleyelca@gmail.com
209-383-0632
Office Hours
8:00 – 11:00 AM Monday-Friday

web page: www.thesovlutheran.net
Also on Facebook

Council President:
Marc Medefind
Cell: 209-777-9302
mrmedefind@aol.com

Sunday worship is live on Zoom at 10:00 AM and in-person in sanctuary. (See updates on calendar & SOV Weekly News emails.)

Please have your articles for the newsletter sent each month by the 15th to:
shepherdofthevalleyelca@gmail.com
Thank you.

THE SHEPHERD'S VOICE newsletter is available as a paper copy for pickup, mailed, or sent as an email attachment, or viewed on the website.

ELCA Statements and information are available on the web sites: Sierra Pacific Synod, spselca.org, and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, elca.org.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Somethings are not "long-lasting". Dirty clothes or a messy house requires continued attention. Continual maintenance...

From college until marriage, I smoked a pack-a-day of Marlboro Reds.

Except... I never smoked a cigarette during the month of January. Each year's new year's resolution would be to "quit smoking".

When I reached the end of the first month of abstinence, I "celebrated" by having one cigarette. One cigarette immediately led to another...

I suspect that many children last month might have attempted to "quit" being naughty. December is a month of appearing "nice" in order to present "good" to Santa. The imposed restriction upon "nice/naughty" might go away once the new year arrives... and, it can be "back to normal" (whatever that may be).

A few years ago, a pastor told me that a preacher does not teach nor present the message... the preacher **reminds** the congregation of the message – the vows of baptism.

As we approach a new year with thought to "giving up" something, perhaps, we consider giving up "giving up". Perhaps, we turn the tradition upside down, and "take on" elements of God's intent.

For instance, I, finally, gave up smoking by not "giving up", but "taking on" a healthier lifestyle – running, exercising, engaged in a loving relationship with my "new" spouse... I found that I could not smoke while running/loving at the same time.

Such it is for a worshipping congregation. We continue to "take on" a faithful life serving God and neighbor. We are to resist the "January only" aspect of our faithful life, and to "take on" life as God intends.

Pastor John



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for healing:
 Dave Bettis; Joel Knox; Gleneda Muralt; Dorothy Woody; Rosie Sullivan; Eric Smith; Gleneda Muralt's niece, Shereida; Nan Dailey; Kimberly Castillo's daughter Jillian and mother-in-law Lupe; Pam Andersen; Pastor John Russell-Curry and his family; Warren Westerberg; Sylvia Poupard; Jeane & David Hetland; Annie Sofranek; David Cherf; and people who are ill around the world.

We lift prayers for our Benevolence of the Month, **Scholarship Fund** and for our Sierra Pacific Synod Bishop, **Jeff Johnson**.

The names on the Prayer List may be removed at the end of each month unless the office is notified that you would like them left on for another month. Please leave a message at the office, 209-383-0632. Thank you.



PRAYER CHAIN

If you have any prayer requests, please contact Pam Andersen at 209-631-4594 to start the Prayer Chain.

Church Council Highlights

The SOV Lutheran Church Council met on Monday, Dec. 15. Here are some highlights of that meeting:

—Pastor John announced that seven new members from the Price and Burnett families, will join our SOV church family, including two that will be baptized.

—Clean-up Day is always the first Saturday of the month. January 3 will mark the first clean-up day of the new year. A clean-up list will be used to prevent doubling up tasks. Council also decided to re-institute our big clean-up weekends twice each year.

—Should the need arise, a box containing a blood pressure kit, a pulsometer, a thermometer, and a church directory is now located in the AV booth at the back of the sanctuary. Many thanks to Don and Susan Gumm for providing these items! If you need to update your emergency contact information, please inform any council member.

—Pledges this year have surpassed those in 2024 by \$19,000 and currently stand at \$72,624.

—Our annual Congregational brunch meeting will take place January 25 after church services.

—Where music is concerned, our services will follow the seasonal Kyrie through December before starting another until Lent begins in February. In addition, Martin Hansen has joined five other pianists/organists who currently “rotate” to provide music for church services.

—Should anyone feel moved to help with the altar guild, or with any volunteering on behalf of the church, please let Pastor John or a council member know. Our stalwart servant Carolyn Stephens will be out for a considerable amount of time as her husband recovers from surgery.

—SOV received a thank you note from the Community Action Agency for the church's help in making the new baby/new mom gift drive a success. SOV was the only church that took part in the effort.

JANUARY 2026

BIBLE TEXT READINGS

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Connie McBride	01/15
Analise Gallaway	01/20
Eleanor Roduner	01/23
Jeane Hetland	01/25
Rosie Sullivan	01/25
Elizabeth Patterson	01/25
Melissa Stephens	01/26

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Hunter Boyenga	02/07
Curtis Boyenga	02/13
Tim Dailey	02/18
Marc Medefind	02/18
Pam Andersen	02/19
Carrie O'Bara	02/20
Pat Shaw	02/24
Mona Kowalczyk	02/24
Syd Saldivar	02/25

MONTHLY BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

Birthday Luncheon will resume on Thursday, January 15, at 11:30 AM. Please watch for more information as to where we will be meeting.

REMINDER

All SOV members who enter the church during the week are reminded to double and triple-check that doors are locked when leaving.
Thanks so much.

Second Sunday after Christmas

Jeremiah 31:7-14 or Sirach 24:1-12
Psalm 147:12-20 or Wisdom 10:15-21
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:[1-9] 10-18

January 4

White

Baptism of Our Lord

Isaiah 42:1-9
Psalm 29
Acts 10:34-43
Matthew 3:13-17

January 11

White

Second Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 49:1-7
Psalm 40:1-11
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
John 1:29-42

January 18

Green

Third Sunday after Epiphany

Isaiah 9:1-4
Psalm 27:1, 4-9
1 Corinthians 1:10-18
Matthew 4:12-23

January 25

Green

THANK YOU LETTER FROM MERCED COUNTY COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCY

Dear Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church,

On behalf of **Merced County Community Action Agency (MCCAA)**, I want to sincerely thank you for your generous donations of **7 raffle baskets, 5 wrapped gifts, 14 wrapped book collections, and numerous used baby items, such as an Owelet sock camera, bottle cleaner, bassinet, activity center and pack n plays** to our **first-ever Community Baby Shower**.

Your support made a direct and meaningful impact on the mothers in our **ECM Maternal Support Service Program**. Because of your generosity, these mothers were able to receive much-needed baby items and resources to help them feel supported and empowered in their journey. Your contribution helped ensure that both mothers and their babies had a stronger start.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership and commitment to our community. Your generosity demonstrates the care and support that makes programs like ours possible, and we are proud to recognize your organization as a valued community partner.

Thank you again for helping us make a difference in the lives of families in Merced County.

Brenda Callahan-Johnson, M.B.A.
Chief Executive Officer

Giving Envelopes & Statements

If you have not picked up your 2026 Giving envelopes, please do so as soon as possible. If you did not receive a box and would like one, please contact Chris Boyenga.

Giving Statements for 2025
will be available by
Sunday, January 25, 2026.

TO MY SOV FAMILY

Thank you for donating shoeboxes to Operation Christmas Child. I should have final numbers after the new year. For some of the children who receive a filled shoebox, it might be the first and maybe the only gift that they will ever receive. Each shoebox brings a child closer to learning about God, His love for them and the Gospel. Thank you, again, for your generosity.

Love in Christ,
Annie

Shepherd of the Valley Website

www.thesovlutheran.net

The website is active and being monitored by Carolyn Daberkow, Administrative Assistant. Take a little time to review the website.

You will find the links to the Zoom gatherings by clicking on ABOUT US, click on WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINES and click on the long link. You will need the Zoom app downloaded to your phone, tablet, or computer first.

Thanks go to Carolyn Daberkow for the continuing updates.

SOV WORSHIP SERVICES ARE ON FACEBOOK

Our worship services can be seen any day, at any time, on Facebook. Just type in the search box "Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Merced" and you will see the church listed. Click on our church and our Facebook page appears, with all the services.

We encourage you to send the service to your family and friends by clicking on the "SHARE" icon below the picture and then use "Share to your friends" or "Send in Messenger" service.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

January & February Benevolence Scholarship Fund

Our benevolence for January and February is our Scholarship fund. Until COVID, our funding was primarily through estate sales; however, for the past few years there have been few opportunities for ways to support this endeavor. In 2025, we awarded two \$300 scholarships to Merced College students: Paschina Weedling and Leslie Cortes, both Nursing students. These students are always so appreciative of our help, and we are grateful to our church family for their support of this worthwhile project.

Donations may be given to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church with Scholarship on the memo line.

ANNUAL FISCAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

The meeting will be held January 25, 2026, after the church service in Lineberger Hall. There will be a brunch hosted by Council members with the meeting to follow.

A nominating committee will be formed of five voting members of the congregation, two of whom, if possible, shall be outgoing council members, to compile a slate for election of members to serve on the Congregational Council.

There will also be an election of voting members and alternates to assemblies of the Sierra Pacific Synod and Conference.

Please prayerfully consider serving on the nominating committee, the Council, or be willing to attend the assemblies.

Reports for the meeting should be submitted to the church office no later than Tuesday, January 6.

Watch for more information.

JANUARY 2026

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Term ends May 2026

Karen Arnold
David John Cherf II
Marc Medefind
Barbara Ward

Term ends May 2027

Mary Jo Knudsen
Mona Kowalczyk
Christine Love
Christopher Tomford

Mona Kowalczyk – Treasurer & Bookkeeper
Christine Boyenga – Financial Secretary

2025-2026 Council Officers

President: Marc Medefind Vice-President: Barb Ward
Secretary: David John Cherf II

*Next Meeting Date: Third Monday of the month
January 19, 2025 10 AM*

JANUARY SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

To help serve the glory of God in worship - please contact Chris Boyenga, 209-769-8544 to participate as Greeter, Usher, or Reader/Assisting Minister for our 10 A.M. Sunday Worship Service.

	Sunday January 4	Sunday January 11	Sunday January 18	Sunday January 25
Greeters/ Attendance	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Susan Gumm</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Chris Love</i>
Ushers	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>	<i>Dave Bettis</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Terry Foote</i>	<i>Tim Shaw</i>	<i>Mona Kowalczyk</i>

SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
				New Year's Day Office Closed	SOV Weekly News sent via email	Church Clean-up 9 AM
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					SOV Weekly News sent via email	
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom				Birthday Luncheon 11:30 AM	SOV Weekly News sent via email	
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom	Council Meeting 10 AM				SOV Weekly News sent via email	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					SOV Weekly News sent via email	
Congregational Meeting After Service						



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1455 E Yosemite Ave
Merced CA 95340

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED