

## 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  
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209-383-0632

#### Office Hours

8:00 – 11:00 AM Monday-Friday

web page: [www.thesovlutheran.net](http://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 15<sup>th</sup> 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](http://spselca.org), and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, [elca.org](http://elca.org).

#### MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

I remember a “fun” thing to do was to dial P-O-P-C-O-R-N to get the exact time (both parents worked long hard hours and we got bored...).

Today, I am overly concerned about the exact time. I start our worship services exactly at 10:00. We begin the Council meetings at exactly 10:00. I go to the clock after worship to see how long it took. I check the clocks to see if the time is right. For daylight savings, I go around and adjust the times. When the power fails, I adjust the times on our clocks. I figure out how to adjust the times on the clocks in the cars.

I once wore a “Casio” sports watch to “time” my running route and races.

Today, I pull the cell phone out of my pocket several times a day to check the exact time (and ask Siri to wake me up in the morning).

In Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8, we're told by the prophet there is “a time for every matter under the heaven”.

In the scriptures, “time is of the essence”. There's no time to “mess around”.

God and the intended progress toward divine intention is as “time” itself. Time and divinity continues to “tick”. Time does not “freeze” nor “stand still”.

We have been given the challenge to continue creating God's intent for all.

For this, we pray and serve others incessantly (like “circles” prayer and service have no beginning nor ending – it is incessant...) and gather inclusively. Divine scripture tells us the time is NOW.

Time is of the essence. This is our blessing and our challenge.

*Pastor John*



**PRAYER REQUESTS**

Prayers for healing:  
Brad Brandstad; Tom Stephens;  
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, **Shepherd of the  
Valley/Healthy House Garden  
Ministry** 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**

Marc Medefind, Council President

On April 20, the Church Council met to take care of church business. **Here are some highlights of the meeting:**

—The annual Congregational Meeting to elect new council members and establish an audit committee has been scheduled for May 17 after the church service. The Council will host a “potato bar” brunch (potatoes with a variety of toppings.)

—Council agreed that our facility use agreements should be updated (particularly regarding tech, such as Zoom use.) This will be taken up this summer.

—Alan Arnold organized a work party to spread wood chips throughout the church’s grounds. AGJ Gardening donated four huge piles of wood chips that volunteers spread on April 19. Marc Medefind will ask Kou, our community gardener, if he is willing to finish the job with pay. He also will ask Kou if he can start chopping the weeds that have gotten out of hand on the east side of our property.

—Mona Kowalczyk, SOV treasurer, is handling the church’s “Statement of Information” for the state of California, a semi-annual requirement.

—Mona also will post information about monthly birthday luncheons in the narthex.

—Council voted to purchase a new office chair for church secretary Carolyn Daberkow.

—Council will consider two ideas that have come from SOV members, including establishing a convocation service to initiate the UC Merced academic year and help us connect to and support the UC community, and to seek opportunities to partner in ministry with Episcopalians who share our sanctuary.

*(Church Council Highlights continue on Page 3.)*

**MAY BIRTHDAYS**

John Carpenter	05/02
Joy Woods	05/03
Ella Boyenga	05/04
Byron Gallaway	05/04
Judy Richards	05/06
Frank Bettis	05/07
Warren Westerberg	05/07
Kaci Gallaway	05/19
Liliane Bettis	05/29
Gleneda Muralt	05/30

**JUNE BIRTHDAYS**

“Chris” Christine Love	06/03
Elizabeth Pressly	06/13
Steve Hand	06/16
Kaydence Gallaway	06/17
Adrian Saldivar	06/18
Jim Christofferson	06/21



**MONTHLY BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON**

Birthday Luncheon will meet on Thursday, May 21, at 11:30 AM at Fiesta Mexicana, 530 W. 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Join us for food and fellowship.

**NOMINATION FOR CHURCH COUNCIL**

Nominating forms to elect four council members at our May Congregational meeting are available in the narthex. Please fill out the form and put it in the offering plate, hand to an usher or return to the church office no later than Sunday, May 3.

**BIBLE TEXT READINGS**

**Fifth Sunday of Easter** **May 3**

Acts 7:55-60  
 Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16  
 1 Peter 2:2-10  
 John 14:1-14 White

**Sixth Sunday of Easter** **May 10**

Acts 17:22-31  
 Psalm 66:8-20  
 1 Peter 3:13-22  
 John 14:15-21 White

**Seventh Sunday of Easter** **May 17**

Acts 1:6-14  
 Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35  
 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11  
 John 17:1-11 White

**Day of Pentecost** **May 24**

Acts 2:1-21 or Numbers 11:24-30  
 Psalm 104:24-34, 35b  
 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13 or Acts 2:1-21  
 John 20:19-23 or 7:37-39 Red

**The Holy Trinity** **May 31**

Genesis 1:1-2:4a  
 Psalm 8  
 2 Corinthians 13:11-13  
 Matthew 28:16-20 White

*(Church Council Highlights continued from Page 2.)*

—The ad hoc SOV landscaping committee met and discussed adding waterwise trees and plants to the SOV landscape. Members will be encouraged to purchase trees and plants, either in honor or in memory of loved ones to be planted on the SOV grounds. A list of suggested trees and plants will be soon put on display in Lineberger Hall.

—Council members who are termed out in May include President Marc Medefind, Secretary David Cherf II, and Karen Arnold, worship and music committee chair. Vice President Barbara Ward also is scheduled to go off but has agreed to stay on council for another term. Four new council members will be elected at our congregational 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.

**Shepherd of the Valley Website**

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.

**2026 Scholarships**

Thanks to the generosity of our congregation, we are able to fund two scholarships for Merced College students as well as members of Shepherd of the Valley. The criteria and application information will be available in the narthex, and all confirmed members are encouraged to apply by June 3.

**BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH  
May & June Benevolence**

The Shepherd of the Valley/Healthy House Garden Project Ministry is our church's Benevolence for the months of May and June. Donations may be given to SOV Lutheran Church with "Garden Ministry" on the memo line.

**Congregational Program Year Meeting  
Sunday, May 17**

The meeting will be held in Lineberger Hall following the 10 AM worship service. The Council will host a "potato bar" brunch (potatoes with a variety of toppings.)

*Plan to attend and assist in the program planning of our congregation.*

One of the items on the agenda will be the election of four Congregation Council members.

We look forward to seeing voting members and friends at this important meeting.

**May Friendship Day  
Celebration & Potluck**

hosted by the  
Church Women United in the Merced Area  
May 8, 2026, at 11:25 AM  
Lineberger Hall at Shepherd of the Valley  
Lutheran Church in Merced.

Bring a friend and a dish of food to share  
& your Fellowship of the Least Coins.

Fellowship, Bible Study, Prayer, and the  
speaker addressing "A Place Called Home"  
For more information, text or phone:  
209-769-8544

MAY 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  
May 18, 2026 10 AM*

**MAY 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 May 3	Sunday May 10	Sunday May 17	Sunday May 24	Sunday May 31
Greeters/ Attendance	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Chris Love</i>	<i>Mona Kowalczyk</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>
Ushers	<i>David Bettis</i>	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>	<i>David Bettis</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Tim Shaw</i>	<i>Mona Kowalczyk</i>	<i>Susan Gumm</i>	<i>Terry Foote</i>	<i>Marc Medefind</i>

**Spread the Word.**  
***Reflection by Nan Dailey***

There they are – 12 men sitting in a row, many sporting chest length beards, all staring straight out at the viewer, with flames dancing atop their heads. It's Pentecost, May 24, 2026.

The disciples have gathered once more to celebrate an important Jewish Festival, Shavuot. A combination of First Fruits of the Harvest Festival and a grand celebration of the giving of the Torah – i.e., the first five books of the Hebrew Bible, which Moses, accompanied by the flash and dash of thunder and lightning, presented to the people upon his second descent from Mt. Sinai.

We generally see a tight connection between a notable event in the development of Christianity and the practice of the Jewish faith and tradition at the time of Christ.

What could possibly be the connection a festival that combines celebrating first fruits and the presentation of the most Holy Work of Judaism to all the people have with the descent of wisdom in the form of flames onto the heads of a select group of men?

I would suggest that the connection is the acquisition of all important knowledge given by God and the distribution of it to all unhindered by different physical languages.

Way back in Genesis 11 we have the story of an attempt to keep all of mankind: “under one roof”, to keep knowledge limited to only a few. – The Tower of Babel. In their pride and arrogance, imagining they can arrange society as they want, these people, who God has specifically told to spread out, to repopulate an earth destroyed in the flood, instead try to build a tower to heaven to keep all knowledge and learning intact in one place, their superiority proven to all.

The flames of Pentecost tell us symbolically all people will understand each other's languages – but remember what the disciples both then and now did and do - they spread God's **living word**. Not some dead old list of God's actions, but the vibrant, lively reality of listening, learning, and sharing pulling us closer and tighter within that vast company of God's children.

**WE REMEMBER**

**Lynette K Figueroa** was a longtime friend and supporter of our Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Merced congregation.

Lynette was born December 13, 1943, and passed away on April 1, 2026, at the age of 82. She lived the last years of her life in Elk Grove, CA. near her son, John DePonte. They continued to keep her home in Merced where Lynette lived for many years with her husband, “Manny” Manuel Figueroa, a member of SOV, until his death in 2019. She will be remembered by many extended family members and friends.

A Memorial service was held for Lynette on April 16, 2026, at Sacramento Memorial Lawn Funeral Home, 6100 Stockton Blvd Sacramento CA 95824.

**Hans-Joachim Kurt Hildebrandt** was a long time SOV member along with his wife Gerda and their three children, Carmen Gabriele, Hans and Kurt Hildebrandt. Hans was born January 22, 1937, in Germany. and passed away on April 2, 2026, at the age of 89 in Fresno, CA. Gerda passed away at the age of 84 in 2022.

Hans's family moved through Canada and into the United States as a young man. He retired after 58 years serving as a medical clinical lab scientist. Hans also served many years as the Financial Secretary for SOV. We always enjoyed hearing him singing in German at the Christmas Eve worship services.

A Funeral Service will be held on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 10:00 AM at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, 785 N Fowler Ave, CA 93611.

SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
MAY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	Church Clean-up 9 AM
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Church Women United 11:25 AM  Knitting Club 2 PM  SOV Weekly Email News	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM  SOV Weekly Email News	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom  Congregational Meeting After service	Council Meeting 10 AM			Birthday Luncheon 11:30 AM Fiesta Mexicana	Knitting Club 2 PM  SOV Weekly Email News	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<b>Pentecost</b>  Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom	<b>Memorial Day</b> <b>Office Closed</b>				Knitting Club 2 PM  SOV Weekly Email News	
31						
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom						



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED