

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.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PULPIT SUPPLY MINISTER – PASTOR JACK

STAFF

Supply Pastor:

Pastor Jack Damien

pulpitsupplyjack@gmail.com

Worship Music Director:

Marit Medefind

209-658-0633

mmedefind@gmail.com

Administrative Assistant:

Carolyn Daberkow

shepherdofthevalleyelca@gmail.com

Office Hours

8:00 – 11:00 am Monday-Friday

web page: www.thesovlutheran.net

Also on Facebook

Council President:

David Cherf

Home: 209-725-0921

Cell: 209-489-7757

djcherf@yahoo.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.

The gifts have been opened, a new calendar is on the wall, and Santa is back at the North Pole!

It's a new year in 2022; a chance for optimism, hope and seeing what the path brings. I hope it brings us closer together at Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, finds more laughter in your life, and gives you greater strength for what lies ahead.

We don't always see far down the landscape, but we know that God is already there at the end of the path – waiting for us. And we will have one another to tell stories to in 12 months about the adventures and perils of this new year.

What we anticipate in our imaginations, and how we respond to what really happens in 2022, makes a huge impact on how we live life day to day.

I pray that we live life to the fullest, make new friends, and eat the last cookie in the box.

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"



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for healing:

Kimberly Castillo’s daughter Jillian and mother-in-law Lupe; Pam Andersen; Tim Dailey; Lois Dailey; Pastor John Russell-Curry and his family; Warren Westerberg; LaVonne Wenrich; Jan & Joe Collins; Dottie Andersen; Sylvia Poupard; Jeane & David Hetland; Jan Carpenter; Karen Darby; Penny Waha; Annie Sofranek; Susanne Smith; 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 **Dr. Rev. Megan Rohrer**.

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.

IN-PERSON WORSHIP

We are continuing to worship in person. The service will also be available on Zoom.

Please note, we will be following safety guidelines of the CDC and the state of CA and are asking all attendees, vaccinated and unvaccinated, to wear a mask and practice social distancing whenever possible.

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

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. Any suggestions/articles and/or photos may be shared with Pat Shaw and Jeane Hetland to be reviewed for placement.

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, along with Jeane Hetland for the continuing updates.

**CONGREGATIONAL MEETING
JANUARY 23, 2022
11:00 AM**

Plan to join the Congregational Meeting that will be held following the worship service at 11:00 AM in Lineberger Hall and via Zoom.

Watch for more information as we get closer to the date.

Members will receive a postcard reminder. Committee Chairs are encouraged to write and send their reports by January 6, 2022 for publication in the meeting handout.

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Karen Chastain	01/03
Elizabeth Sofranek	01/14
Connie McBride	01/15
Analise Gallaway	01/20
Eleanor Roduner	01/23
Jeane Hetland	01/25
Wanda Ramondini	01/25
Rosie Sullivan	01/25
Elizabeth Patterson	01/25
Melissa Stephens	01/26
Briana Hamamoto-Hardman	01/30
Keira Hamrah	01/30
Vivian Knepel	01/31

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Kurt Faust	02/03
Armando Campos III	02/04
Hunter Boyenga	02/07
"Bud" Richard Roduner	02/08
Curtis Boyenga	02/13
Tim Dailey	02/18
Dimitri Hamrah	02/18
Marc Medefind	02/18/
Pam Andersen	02/19
Carrie O'Bara	02/20
Pat Shaw	02/24
Syd Saldivar	02/25
Adam Campos	02/28



BIBLE TEXT READINGS

Second Sunday of Christmas **January 2**

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

White

Baptism of Our Lord **January 9**

Isaiah 43:1-7
 Psalm 29
 Acts 8:14-17
 Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

White

Second Sunday after Epiphany **January 16**

Isaiah 62:1-5
 Psalm 36:5-10
 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
 John 2:1-11

Green

Third Sunday after Epiphany **January 23**

Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
 Psalm 19
 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
 Luke 4:14-21

Green

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany **January 30**

Jeremiah 1:4-10
 Psalm 71:1-6
 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
 Luke 4:21-3

Green

WOMEN'S PRISON GIFT BAG PROJECT

The Inmate Family Council at the Central California Women's Prison is Chowchilla has expressed their gratefulness for our church's participation in the holiday gift bag project. Up to 80,000 items are collected, sorted, packed and distributed each year for delivery to inmates just before Christmas. For many inmates, this is the only remembrance they receive during the holidays. A sample of the many letters received from the women:

"Thank you so very much for making our Christmas special. We all appreciate your time, effort and concern to try and make some joy in our lives in here at a time when most of us get sad and homesick. God bless you. Thank you." --
 Inmates in room #8

Collection of items is ongoing, and a storage container, with a list of acceptable items, is available for that purpose in the narthex. Contact Jeane at 388-1608 if you have questions.

**PROPERTY REPORT
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER , 2021**

NIGHTTIME LIGHTS: These lights continue to be adjusted as needed.

TREES/SPRINKLERS: Trees are still being looked at for good candidates. Ken has been working on the sprinklers/valves for watering the future trees.

SOUND/POWER POINT: My boys and Amy have been handling. Sound guy continues to get mic checks prior to service. Gearing up for power point and Zoom to be combined.

DOORS: Associate Lock and Safe replaced faulty lever handles to both the kitchen and office..

FIRE DEPT, DOORS, HYDRANTS: The fire dept came thru and did their annual inspection. We had the fire hydrants and fire door inspected and recertified.

FALL CLEANUP: We had 15 members show up to help clean up around and inside the church.

Almost everything was put on hold for the month due to medical operations for both me and my extended family.

Please notify me ASAP of any issues that arise that I can get on top of promptly.

David Cherf, Property Manager
cell text message (209)489-7757
home voice message (209) 725-0921

The Bicycle Ministry is planning a “bike drop-off” in the parking lot by the storage shed on Saturday, January 29 from 10:00 AM to noon.

Watch for further announcements.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

**January & February Benevolence
Scholarship Fund**

We have a worthwhile benevolence for January and February—our Scholarship fund. The scholarship fund has been funded by estate sales; however, it needs additional support. With COVID 19, there has not been many opportunities for sales and ways to support this endeavor. We are so excited that now our church family has an opportunity to help with this worthwhile project.

See the thank you notes written by the 2021 recipients included on the next page.



Merced College Scholarship Recipients Thank-you Notes

From Kati Baca:

I feel extremely grateful to have been granted a \$250 scholarship. Thank you for your generosity towards me which will allow me to purchase textbooks and supplies during my last semester in the nursing program.

As I continue to work towards becoming a Registered Nurse, I take comfort in knowing that I was granted this scholarship. Because of your scholarship, I can focus more on my educational goals and not have to stress about finances.

Thank you again for your thoughtful and generous gift.

From Aislinn Ramirez:

I would like to take this opportunity to cordially extend my gratitude for your generosity and support. I am honored to have been selected as the recipient of your scholarship award.

This fall 2021 semester will be my third semester at Merced College. I am majoring in the Elementary Teacher Education program offered in partnership between community colleges like Merced College and California State Universities. Upon completion of my associate degree for transfer at Merced College, I plan to transfer to a four-year university and earn a bachelor's degree, followed by a multi-subject teaching credential, in order to become an elementary school teacher. My academic success, interactions with children, and experience as both a tutor and mentor in high school have greatly impacted my decision with respect to my future career, while also giving me an opportunity to demonstrate my competence for the position. Furthermore, I value the learned skills that will be utilized for the rest of one's life, and I hope to make a positive impact on my students' lives and educational journeys just as you have impacted my own.

By awarding me your scholarship, you have not only validated my hard work with respect to my academics, but you have also motivated me to continue to be passionate about my education by showing me that hard work pays off. Moreover, you

have enabled me to focus on my academics by relieving me of much of the financial strain that college expenses bring. I cannot stress enough how thankful I am for your thoughtful gift.

From Zion Brigham:

Hello. My name is Zion Brigham. I am very thankful for your scholarship and support for my future academic achievements. It really means a lot that there are so many great people in the world that still believe in the next generation. In my future I'm looking to go into agriculture business and pursue a career in banking/agriculture. Again, thank you for your generosity and helping me fulfill my dreams.

From Joseph Hayward:

I am very humbled to have been selected for the Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church Scholarship. Being a first-generation college student, the many opportunities this scholarship provides will allow me to achieve my dreams. With this scholarship, I can afford college fees, textbooks, and other necessities that would not have been easily accessible before. This support and knowledge of a scholarship foundation supporting me ignites my ever-growing determination to complete my dreams.

I am pursuing my degree in Liberal Studies: Elementary Education to teach future generations of students. Coming this Fall Semester, I will be a sophomore with 40 units. After obtaining my Associates Degree with Merced College, I plan to transfer to CSU Stanislaus to complete my bachelor's degree and obtain my credential. I will work hard, study, and keep your generosity in my mind throughout the rest of my college experience to reach my goal.

Because of this opportunity, I can focus on my education without worrying about the financial tolls of college. By entrusting me with this scholarship, I promise to finish out the goal I set out for myself. When I am in front of that classroom in a couple of years, I can think that it wouldn't have been possible without your kindness. Thank you so very much!

JANUARY 2022

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Term ends May 2022

Pat Shaw
Marit Medefind
Sally Sales
Steve Hand (one year term)

Term ends May 2023

David Cherf
Betty Madsen
Amy Sofranek

Tim Shaw - Interim Treasurer & Bookkeeper
Christine Boyenga – Financial Secretary
Audit Committee 2021: Carolyn Stephens, Bryan Hoffman & Mary Jo Knudsen

2021-2022 Council Officers

President: David Cherf as of November 1
Secretary: Amy Sofranek

Vice-President: To be determined

*Next Meeting Date: **January 11, 2022 6:00 PM***

JANUARY SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

	Sunday January 2	Sunday January 9	Sunday January 16	Sunday January 23	Sunday January 30
Screeners	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Nan Dailey</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>
Ushers	<i>Dave Bettis Dave Sofranek</i>	<i>Cherf Family</i>	<i>Dave Bettis Dave Sofranek</i>	<i>Cherf Family</i>	<i>Dave Bettis Dave Sofranek</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Nan Dailey</i>	<i>Pat & Tim Shaw</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>	<i>Pam Andersen</i>	<i>Marc Medefind</i>



Spiritual Reflection by

Nan Mengebier Dailey

So, do we all have our 2022 resolutions and goals, lists, and plans meticulously organized with key dates marked with different colored pens in/on our desk calendars? I wish! What I **do** have, though, is a “sacred word” for the next year. Christine Valters Painter first introduced me to the idea of having a single word (though in her design it need not be a “sacred” word) that can be identified through prayer, contemplation, meditation, sitting in silence, walking a labyrinth, indeed virtually anything that allows one to move inward towards one’s heart and soul while letting the chattering mind go out for lunch. She suggests that such a word can become a symbol or talisman during an individual’s internal journey in the following year.

What I’ve done the last couple of years is make a list of what I experience as sacred words. This is not an analytic practice for me. I try not to think but to feel my way. I really just free associate – after, of course, sending my criticizing ego out to lunch.

Here are some words I’ve identified for 2022: Holy, Worship, Comfort, Love, Light, Share, Justice, Grief, Serve, Sacrifice, Joy, Journey, Peace, Hope, Celebrate, Rejoice, Rebirth, Pray, Holy Spirit, Sacred Darkness, Teach, Blessing.

Next I’ll read the list slowly either out loud or to myself – noticing which (if any) word(s) have “appeal for me. I read it as many times as I need/want and let the words roll around in me until I “settle” on one. I can’t really articulate for you what it is that causes me to settle on one word as opposed to another. But it’s kind of like when I am trying to pick a dish to cook. I look through my loose recipes and probably some cookbooks, until I decide “Yup. That’s the one I want to make.” But what goes into that “Yup”?

Well, it’s things like the time it takes, or the ingredients required or whether I want a tried-and-true recipe I’m familiar with or one that sends me waaaay out of my comfort zone. And no, we are NOT going to talk puff pastry here. But the point is, those are not factors I go into the process consciously thinking about.

Similarly, there must be factors that affect which word I “settle on” but I’ve not been successful in identifying them. So, the best I can tell you, if you want to try this out, is to feel your way through it. What word touches your core?

Once I’ve settled on a word, I let it serve throughout the year as a guide for me; or a goal; or a check in point. Or maybe it’s a signpost, a boundary, or a threshold. Now I’m sure if I listen hard enough, I can hear you all muttering “Come on, Nan! What the heck does **that** mean???”

Well, let me try an example. When I am going through the valley of the shadow of death or the dark night of the soul, both of which I experience at times, I usually feel lost, alone, despairing. My word could help me reach out to the Divine. Or it might help me remember that I am not alone. Or it might remind me of a prayer that says just exactly what I need to say, or a passage(s) in scripture that feels relevant.

I realize this has all probably been more than a bit vague, but I hope that it may at least have given you an idea of how “working” with your sacred word, might draw you closer in relationship to our God.

2022 OFFERING ENVELOPES

REMINDER—If you have not yet picked up your offering envelopes, please do so as soon as possible. They are located on a table in the narthex.

**For those who have been concerned about Pastor John Russell-Curry,
we have received an update from him.**

It's been almost a full year...

Early in the morning on December 28, 2020, I was taken to the hospital in an ambulance due to severe pain in the back that prevented me from almost all movement. I spent 6 weeks flat on my back at Mercy Hospital, UCSF, and a rehab facility. (Due to COVID, I had no visitors all that time, and was not allowed to leave my room - even very few staff members could enter. Very seldom did I have the privilege of looking out a window.) All interaction with Shepherd of the Valley was interrupted in a very brief "flash" of a moment. Besides the physical impositions, my pain and depression over the situation interfered with almost all contacts.

I have never "finished" thinking about that day. I was experiencing one of the biggest "moments" of my life being involved with the challenges of SOV - the ever-changing COVID restrictions and the creativity used to meet the needs of worship in such times. I was "riding high"! and enjoying every single moment and every single interaction with each congregation member. I enjoy and treasure each and every one of you - and remember you all fondly.

Recovery remains slow, but steady. I can walk a bit, but am in constant pain no matter what I do. It is unpleasant and debilitating if I venture to walk, stand, sit, lie down, drive a car, bend over... (so I try to avoid such activities). It is very humbling and sad to me to explain to my three-year-old grandson that grandpa is unable to get down on the floor to play (besides hurting to get down, I can't get up).

I'm still involved with medical/therapeutic intervention.

For the tiny few of you who have spoken to me, I've freely shared that it's not just my physical condition that interferes with resuming "normal" duties/interactions. I have noticed reduced cognitive functioning (but, it seems to improve slowly alongside the physical improvements).

I have learned a lot!

I have learned much about the medical world that I didn't want to know.

I have learned that I needed to learn about situations that are so common to a significant percentage of people throughout our community and throughout God's creation.

I am smarter than I was - however, I remain weaker than before.

I suspect this weakness is making me much better at meeting the needs of those I meet and serve.

I truly wish only the best for the future of Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church and all who are associated.

Humbly in God's name,
John Russell-Curry

If you would like to send cards or letters to Pastor John Russell-Curry, you may do so at the following address: 2068 Teak Avenue, Merced, CA 95340.

JANUARY, 2022

SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
 JANUARY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
						NEW YEARS DAY
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Worship: 10:00 AM Sanctuary & Zoom			No Bible Study		SOV Weekly News sent via email	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Worship: 10:00 AM Sanctuary & Zoom		Council Meeting 6:00 PM	Bible Study 10:00 AM		SOV Weekly News sent via email	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Worship: 10:00 AM Sanctuary & Zoom			Bible Study 10:00 AM		SOV Weekly News sent via email	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Worship: 10:00 AM Sanctuary & Zoom Congregation Meeting: 11:00 AM Lineberger Hall & Zoom			Bible Study 10:00 AM		SOV Weekly News sent via email	Bike Drop-Off 10 AM – noon Parking Lot by Storage Shed
30	31					
Worship: 10:00 AM Sanctuary & Zoom						



Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED