

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:
Barb Ward
Cell: 209-617-7592
barbew4352@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

On July 5, 2026, I made a couple of announcements from the pulpit, and invited congregants to provide others. A member indicated wishing to make an announcement (which he did).

The following morning, I sought members who had been at the previous day's service, and asked, "*What is he going to do with all those deviled eggs?*"

"Deviled eggs?"

"Yes, members are to consider donating deviled eggs to the office staff."

"He didn't ask for deviled eggs! He asked for "double A's" (batteries)."

"Huh. I guess that makes more sense."

Worship services are often very familiar activities that are addressed each Sunday. Intentionally, worship planners want the participants to be comforted with the familiar, not to be "rattled" by the themes for songs, prayers, and messages.

At other times, some of the worship (especially, the sermon) is material that requires the congregation to listen intensely – to be challenged. This material deserves to be "chewed on" for a while for pondering and questioning. It takes work.

"I wonder where we're going to put these eggs I brought?"

Metaphorically (not literally), "chew on this" for a while.

Pastor John



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for healing:
Brad Brandstad; 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, **Restore Merced** 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

Chris Love, Council Secretary
Council met on Monday, July 14

Pastor is vacationing with family July 26-30.

Pastor will be out of office, Monday, August 10th, for a
family day.

Council meeting and retreat are combined for August
on Saturday, August 15th from 9-12pm with a meal.

Trash dumpster will soon have a locking bar to avoid
nonchurch use and a no loitering sign will be posted to
avoid liability.

There will be a Back-to-School service blessing on
Sunday, August 30th, with snacks following: please
invite students with families, and teachers!
Congregation can contribute sandwiches, salads, or
desserts for the celebration.

Council will work on a recipe box for needs and place
it in the Social Hall near the snacks; feel free to pick up
a need card and fill it; thank you.

It takes our church family to keep our fellowship and
mission going.

Scholarships Update

We are happy to announce that we were able to award three scholarships for the 2026-27 school year—two
through Merced College, and one to a member of our congregation.

The scholarships through Merced College are given after we receive the names and information online based on
our chosen criteria. Committee members then evaluate the applications and rate each one based on a rubric provided
by the college. This year, we chose Teresa Gross and Mary Xiong, both of whom are nursing students and are
caregivers/sole support of their families.

It has been a while since we've had applicants from our congregation for our own SOV Scholarship. This year, we
were pleased to present Hunter Price a scholarship in the amount of \$400 to assist him in pursuing his education
leading to a degree in Business Administration.

Congratulations to these students as they continue their educational journey to achieve their goals!

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Jim Goldsmith 08/02

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Jesse Saldivar 09/03

Amy Sofranek 09/05

Kimberly Castillo 09/11

Jan Carpenter 09/14

Emily Saldivar 09/27

MONTHLY BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

Birthday Luncheon will meet
on Thursday, August 20, at
11:30 AM at
Toni's Courtyard Café,
516 W. 18th St.
Join us for food and
fellowship.



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.

BIBLE TEXT READINGS

Tenth Sunday After Pentecost

August 2

Isaiah 55:1-5

Psalms 145:8-9, 14-21

Romans 9:1-5

Matthew 14:13-21

Green

Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

August 9

1 Kings 19:9-18

Psalms 85:8-13

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

Green

Twelfth Sunday After Pentecost

August 16

Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

Psalms 67

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15:(10-20) 21-28

Green

Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

August 23

Isaiah 51:1-6

Psalms 138

Romans 12:1-8

Matthew 16:13-20

Green

Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost

August 30

Jeremiah 15:15-21

Psalms 26:1-8

Romans 12:9-21

Matthew 16:21-28

Green

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.

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.

**Information from the Synod Assembly
on May 30, 2026**



New Logo for Sierra Pacific Synod

We are on the way with Jesus together: inviting interdependence, cultivating discipleship, accompanying leaders, and fostering belonging. Together, these four commitments guide how we organize our lives, steward our resources, and participate in God's work in the world. We are updating our logo to reflect this shared mission.

Designed by the Rev. Dr. Gabi Schroeder of Faith Lutheran Church in Meadow Vista, this new logo centers around a cross-path that branches outward in life and mission. The four sections of leaves mirror the ELCA's four-quadrant logo and reflect both our shared ELCA mission as well as our four synodical commitments. Though each section is distinct, they are all connected through the cross-path at the center — a visual reminder that we are on the way of Jesus Christ and belong to one another.

The colors and movement in the design reflect the diversity of our synod, stretching from the Pacific shores to the Nevada Desert, where we serve communities in bustling cities, suburbs, and rural areas. We are many communities united in one body with a shared mission.

This logo is more than a new image; it is a reflection of who we are becoming on the way of Jesus together.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

July & August Benevolence

Restore Merced

419 W. 19th Street, Merced, CA 95348

www.restoremerced.org

209-580-5791

OUR WORK

Our work is about change. We seek to create opportunities for neighbors with barriers to employment to move from their current condition of instability to a stable one. As a Christian organization, all of this is rooted in the Story of God found in Scripture. God has a plan for everything in our world and our lives that needs mending. We believe that every human being was created to join God in that process of transformation.

OUR HISTORY

Restore Merced was born in 2016 from the desire to faithfully embody what it means to be the people of God in a particular place - leveraging what we've been given for the sake of others and the flourishing of the whole community.

We started our Restore Jobs program in 2018 - offering a holistic solution to job training and economic development for neighbors with barriers to employment. We perform litter abatement and general clean-up work for the City of Merced, Merced County, and the Caltrans/BCOE Back 2 Work Program.

In 2024, we expanded our training program by starting Restore Farms. We grow and sell fresh produce while providing paid work experience to trainees who are interested in agriculture - stewarding the resources of Merced County for the good of the whole community.

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

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Term ends May 2027

Mary Jo Knudsen
 Mona Kowalczyk
 Christine Love
 Christopher Tomford

Term ends May 2028

Alan Arnold
 Lora Burnett
 Susan Gumm
 Barb Ward

Mona Kowalczyk – Treasurer & Bookkeeper
 Christine Boyenga – Financial Secretary

2026-2027 Council Officers

President: Barb Ward
 Secretary: Chris Love

Vice-President: Christopher Tomford

Next Meeting Date: Second Monday of the month

***August meeting will be combined with
 Church Council Retreat on Saturday, August 15,
 starting at 9 AM***

AUGUST 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 August 2	Sunday August 9	Sunday August 16	Sunday August 23	Sunday August 30
Greeters/ Attendance	Chris Boyenga	Mary Jo Knudsen	Chris Boyenga	Mona Kowalczyk	Chris Boyenga
Ushers	Donald Gumm	David Bettis	Donald Gumm	David Bettis	Alan Arnold
Reader/Assisting Ministers	Susan Gumm	Bronwen Maxson Strubbe	Chris Love	Mary Jo Knudsen	Marc Medefind

Come and See

Reflection by Nan Dailey

I have increasingly come to appreciate the story of Philip and Nathanael, because for me it's a story about trust. And the focus is not only trust in the divine but trust in one another. You can find it in the Gospel of John, chapter 1, verses 43-46.

You remember it: Nathanael is hanging out under a fig tree and Philip, his friend, comes to him with the most amazing news ever: "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote - Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." (v 45)

Nathanael's reaction to this revelation? He scoffs at it. (v 46) "Can anything good come out of Nazareth"? I can just see him, can't you, with a bit of a sneer on his face saying "Oh come on now, Phillip. From Nazareth the Messiah has come??? And if you believe that, I have a bridge I'll sell you in Brooklyn."

I love what Philip's response is. He doesn't argue with Nathanael. He doesn't give examples of Jesus' actions to prove his point. He simply stretches out his hand saying, "Come and See." (v 46)

Now I think it's pretty impressive that Philip left Jesus and his disciples to find his friend especially when you consider that Philip himself had only just begun his discipleship (v 43). He'd only begun to know the Son of God.

But he so passionately wanted his BFF, Nathanael, to have what he, Philip, now had, i.e., direct contact with the Divine, that he left the side of the Master to find him. He wanted Nathanael to share the richness of a God given life which had, so recently, been revealed to Phillip.

Even after his snarky comment about no-account Nazareth, Nathanael does, in fact, **go** with Phillip. He leaves his fig tree (which I'd guess was providing him with some badly needed shade) and responds to Philip's simple sounding invitation to "Come and See."

Why? Why was Nathanael able to set aside his prejudice against Nazareth, at least temporarily, and go with Philip? Because these two guys loved each other, they trusted each other, they knew, without even having to check, that the other had their back.

Is this what our relationship with God could be like? Could love flow between us? Could I, without even thinking about it, trust that God has my back? Could God be my BFF? I think so. I really do think so. Philip and Nathaneal, those close-knit friends, give us a human example of how faith and trust in another can open us to newness of life. So, the next time someone stretches their hand out to me saying "You've absolutely **got** to Come and See this" I think I'll take them up on the offer.

**SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
AUGUST CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1			1
						Church Clean-up 9 AM
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	Church Council Meeting & Retreat 9 AM - Noon
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom				Birthday Luncheon 11:30 AM Toni's Courtyard Cafe	Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
30	31					
Back-to-School Service Blessing with snacks following Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom						



Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church
1455 E Yosemite Ave
Merced CA 95340

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED