

JULY 2026

## 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](http://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 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.

#### MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Our liturgical year is over. We will participate in 25 Sundays of "Ordinary Days". "School is out" and we will venture outside for swimming, hiking, bicycles, gardening, beaches, mountains, rivers, animals (butterflies, lizards, and fairy shrimp).

In Genesis, God presented care of earth's needs and wonders. It was determined to be "good". God put humanity on earth to take care of "nature", while we have learned to recognize that "nature" takes care of us much more than the reverse.

I was a sophomore at U.C. Davis on April 22, 1970, the first Earth Day proposed by Senator Gaylord Nelson. The Senator recruited young people to address those who have declared "war" upon our earth and all that it includes.

Last May 30, 2026, four representatives from this church attended a Synod gathering which included proposed resolutions. The one of note was a resolution to join the World Council of Churches' commitment to hold an Ecumenical Decade of Climate Justice Action.

During this next decade or longer, we will be challenged to address this concern amongst ourselves and in community with all. The earth is one of our "especially most needy" partners.

"Nature is not a place to visit, it is home". *Gary Snyder*

*Pastor John*

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).



**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, June 8.

Pastor will be on vacation Sunday, July 26th; Marc  
Medefind will fill the pulpit supply.

A memorial will be held for Bonnie Winter on  
Wednesday, June 24th, 2026; all invited; Jett Winter is  
hosting with slide show and catering in social hall.

Will start doing blessings for graduates; June 14 will  
be Devon Cherf.

Music committee has formal meeting June 11th for  
planning.

Church Council Meetings will continue the 2nd Monday  
of each month from 10am-12pm.

Pianist pay will increase to \$100 per service starting  
June 7th, 2026.

Opening and closing church duties will be assigned to  
council members and those with keys.

Church Council Retreat will be Saturday, August 15th,  
2026, from 9am-12pm at Shepherd of the Valley  
Church.



**JULY BIRTHDAYS**

Jan Collins	07/01
LaVonne Wenrich	07/02
Beth Loredo	07/09
Carol Linneman	07/10
David Hetland	07/11
Barbara Ward	07/12
Erica Kateley	07/16
Mary Jo Knudsen	07/18
Judy Westerberg	07/19
Natalie Saldivar	07/22
Devin Cherf	07/31

**AUGUST BIRTHDAYS**

Jim Goldsmith	08/02
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**MONTHLY BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON**

Birthday Luncheon will meet on Thursday, July 16, at 11:30 AM at Five Ten Bistro, 510 W. Main 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**

<b>Sixth Sunday After Pentecost</b>	<b>July 5</b>
Zechariah 9:9-12	
Psalms 145:8-14	
Romans 7:15-25a	
Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30	Green
<b>Seventh Sunday After Pentecost</b>	<b>July 12</b>
Isaiah 55:10-13	
Psalms 65:(1-8) 9-13	
Romans 8:1-11	
Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23	Green
<b>Eighth Sunday After Pentecost</b>	<b>July 19</b>
Isaiah 44:6-8 or Wisdom 12:13, 16-19	
Psalms 86:11-17	
Romans 8:12-25	
Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43	Green
<b>Ninth Sunday After Pentecost</b>	<b>July 26</b>
1 Kings 3:5-12	
Psalms 119:129-136	
Romans 8:26-39	
Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52	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.

### Help Plant Trees with The Tent of Nations

In January 2026, members of the Synod visited The Tent of Nations, a farm owned more than 100 years by the Daoud Nassar family who are Lutheran Palestinians living in the West Bank about 10 km from Bethlehem. In 1991, the Israeli authorities declared the Nassar family farm (and surrounding lands) as “state land” and have bulldozed and burnt out many of their orchards. Since then, the family has fought in court to re-register and protect their land. Yet, the family is committed to nonviolent resistance, environmental stewardship, intercultural education, and connecting people with the land.

The Synod tourists planted 10 (\$500) olive trees as a symbol of their steadfastness and our solidarity. They want to help Daoud Nasar and his family plant 200 more trees (\$50/tree). Your contribution, of any amount, helps them reach the goal of \$10,000. You may donate and send a check to the Synod Office or and designate your gift to Tent of Nations or online on the website: <https://www.spselca.org/blog/help-us-plant-trees-with-the-tent-of-nations>

**New Logo for Sierra Pacific Synod was revealed at the Synod Assembly.**



**Sierra Pacific Synod**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

### BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

July & August Benevolence

#### Restore Merced

419 W. 19th Street, Merced, CA 95348

[www.restoremerced.org](http://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                                      Vice-President: Christopher Tomford  
 Secretary: Chris Love

*Next Meeting Date: Second Monday of the month  
 July 13, 2026 10 AM*

**JULY 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 July 5	Sunday July 12	Sunday July 19	Sunday July 26
Greeters/ Attendance	<i>Stacy &amp; Kylie Christofferson</i>	<i>Chris Love</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>
Ushers	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>	<i>David Bettis</i>	<i>Alan Arnold</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Susan Gumm</i>	<i>Mona Kowalczyk</i>	<i>Terry Foote</i>

**Saintly Match Game—Part 2**  
**Reflection by Nan Dailey**

Descriptor from Hymn	Your Best Match	Relevant Text from the Hymn
I Sing a Song of the saints of God, patient and brave and true, who toiled and fought and lived and died for the Lord they loved and knew.		
Doctor		And one was a doctor,
Queen		And one was a queen
Shepherdess on the Green		And one was a shepherdess on the green
They were all of them saints of God, and I mean, God helping, to be one too. 2. They loved their Lord so dear, so dear, and His love made them strong, and they followed the right for Jesus' sake, the whole of their good lives long.		
Soldier		And one was a soldier
Priest		And one was a priest
Slain by a fierce wild beast		and one was slain by a fierce wild beast;
And there's not any reason, no, not the least, why I shouldn't be one too.		

- John Donne
- Joan D'Arc
- St. Margaret of Scotland
- St. Ignatius
- Luke the Evangelist
- Martin of Tours

<p align="center"><b>Answers</b></p> <p>Luke the Evangelist</p> <p>St. Margaret of Scotland</p> <p>Joan D'Arc</p> <p>Martin of Tours</p> <p>John Donne</p> <p>St. Ignatius</p>
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JULY 2026

SHEPHERD OF THE VALLEY LUTHERAN CHURCH  
JULY CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	Church Clean-up 9 AM
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom	Council Meeting 10 AM			Birthday Luncheon 11:30 AM Five Ten Bistro	Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom					Knitting Club 2 PM SOV Weekly Email News	
26	27	28	29	30		
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom						



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED