

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 PASTOR

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.

I wonder about the role of a pastor... I wonder a lot and often.

I seek and wish for feedback about my performance, but I don't get much. I hope that receiving some sort of criticism might include a little bit of positive feedback, and that harsh criticism might be "gentle" in nature.

After one pulpit supply occasion in Tracy, a parishioner handed me a note. It said, "You aren't getting paid by the word. You're getting paid by the souls saved."

A congregation member here admitted to me, "Well, you do tend to be a bit 'wordy'".

On February 25, 2025, it will be the one-year anniversary of my installation as pastor of SOV. The required pastor's report at the annual congregation meeting at the end of January might reveal some of progress/attention proposed and made during that year.

Admittedly, I had/have no idea what I am doing. I suspect being "newly installed" might resemble a new stepparent. I have encountered some reflections about children of one parent "dating". The date might be kind and supportive to the children of a possible new family, but the children learn to not "leave themselves exposed". One "date" might hang around a while, but might disappear to be substituted by another.

It must be difficult being a child in a "separated" family.

A stepparent has very little knowledge of "how things are done". The stepparent tends to be the "disrupter" rather than the reconciler.

Over time, fewer disruptions might occur as new family configurations become the "norm".

When there is reconciliation and wholeness, there is the "saved soul".

A pastor does, indeed, get paid by the word, but it's with the capital "W" – the presentation of the Word as given to us in John 1: 1.

Amen.

Pastor John



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for healing:

Dave Bettis; Joel Knox; Gleneda Muralt; Dorothy Woody; Rosie Sullivan; Karen Darby; Eric Smith; Gleneda Muralt's niece, Shereida; Lynette Figueroa; 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; Penny Waha; 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.

WANTED

Volunteers to join the Prayer Chain Team.

We are short a couple members. All it requires is that you are willing to receive a phone call, make a phone call, and pray for any of our church family members who requests a team prayer. If you are interested and willing, please let Pam Andersen know by contacting her at 209-631-4594.

KNITTING CLUB

A new knitting club is being proposed by Jan and Mona. It is still in the planning stage and if you are interested in joining or know someone who might be, please contact Jan Collins or Mona Kowalczyk. The beginning knitter's club is to produce newborn baby hats to deliver to the hospital.

CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES

January 13, 2024

At our January Church Council meeting, we:

—Planned for our annual Congregational meeting and luncheon. Council members will make breakfast casseroles and will provide fruit and coffee for the congregation.

--Were credited \$130 for the bad poinsettias we purchased at Christmas. This will go for Easter Lillies. We also will again have crosses available for everyone on Palm Sunday.

—Changed one of our annual benevolences. During September and October, we will support "New Beginnings for Merced County Animals." (We dropped the Boys and Girls Club)

—Lastly, we changed our monthly Council meeting time to the second Tuesday at 6 p.m.



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Kurt Faust	02/03
Armando Campos III	02/04
Hunter Boyenga	02/07
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
Mary Rahn	02/21
Mona Kowalczyk	02/24
Pat Shaw	02/24
Syd Saldivar	02/25
Adam Campos	02/28

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Alan Arnold	03/06
Dorothy Woody	03/07
Monte Hamamoto	03/08
Bill Turner	03/08
Carol Girard	03/09
Carolyn Stephens	03/10
Dan Woods	03/10
Christine Boyenga	03/11
Phil Rahn	03/14
Dylan Cherf	03/20
Susan McGaughy	03/23
Ken Sullivan	03/26
Carolyn Daberkow	03/26
Claudia Fournier	03/26
David Pressly	03/27
Patti LiWang	03/28
Brent Sales	03/29
Tiana LiWang	03/31

MONTHLY BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

We will be meeting at 11:30 AM on Thursday, February 20 at Golden Bowl Chinese Restaurant, 3144 G Street, Merced.
Join us for food and fellowship.

BIBLE TEXT READINGS

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	February 2
Jeremiah 1:4-10	
Psalms 71:1-6	
1 Corinthians 13:1-13	
Luke 4:21-30	Green
Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	February 9
Isaiah 6:1-8 (9-13)	
Psalms 138	
1 Corinthians 15:1-11	
Luke 5:1-11	Green
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany	February 16
Jeremiah 17:5-10	
Psalms 1	
1 Corinthians 15:12-20	
Luke 6:17-26	Green
Seventh Sunday after Epiphany	February 23
Genesis 45:3-11, 15	
Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40	
1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50	
Luke 6:27-38	Green

Annual Fiscal Meeting Report By Marc Medefind, Council President

The Shepherd of the Valley Congregation gathered for the annual Fiscal Meeting on Jan. 26. All church committee chairpersons reported on their committee's work in 2024 as well as plans and prospective changes for 2025.

Five Church Council Nominating Committee members were elected, including Pam Andersen, Chris Love, Jan Collins, Carolyn Stephens and Judy Westerberg. Steve Hand, Jan Collins and Mary Jo Knudsen will term out in May leaving three council positions to fill. Tim and Pat Shaw were also elected to represent Shepherd of the Valley at the annual Synod Assembly on June. 14.

The congregation also voted to accept the treasurer's report, presented by Mona Kowalczyk, and adopted the 2025 Congregational budget. Our year-ending balance sheet showed total assets at \$229,684.61. The best news on the budget front was that the church finished with income more than \$21,000 above what was budgeted while expenditures were approximately \$9,000 over budget.

Financial Secretary Chris Boyenga said 23 families pledged just over \$71,000 for 2025. Chris also presented a graph that showed most of the church giving was in the \$1,000-\$3,000 per family range. Regarding membership, it was noted that the church has 105 voting members currently on record.

A request for compensation for Sunday service AV work was referred to the Church Council.

Pastor John opened and closed the meeting with prayer. His report noted that during his first full year at Shepherd of the Valley, he has many times asked "What did you do last year?"

"All of what we do and what can be accomplished is due to the tireless presence and support of God's Holy Spirit who never tires of hearing me ask, "Now what? What did we do last year?" . . . The Holy Spirit responds, "Wait 'til next year! Creation is all about possibility," he noted. "It all comes from divine intervention. Let that never go unspoken, nor left empty in our hearts.

PROPERTY REPORT

January 10, 2025

December - January

HVACS: Haven't had any problems with the furnaces/heat.

FENCE: Abutting property owners are not wanting to replace our shared fences because of the cost. We will be looking at alternatives.

OUTDOOR LIGHTS: Bulbs were ordered and are getting replaced.

FIRE SAFETY CHECKS: Over the past 2 months, all of our fire safety inspections were completed with the help of Caroline D. overseeing that they were done in a timely manner.

SPRINKLERS: Leak in a main valve box in front is being looked at by a gardener.

POWER POINT, ZOOM, PA SYSTEM: We have a constant 40-50 views of our weekly services on ZOOM on Facebook. Our power point operator says that we do not have enough RAM for the power point program, which in turn, causes the screen outages.

SPRINKLERS: I have turned down the sprinkler times to a minimum. We have always shut off the sprinklers until spring, but I was told that this causes the sprinkler gaskets to get stuck and decay making lots of sprinklers needing to be fixed in the spring.

HOMELESS: So far this winter we have had no incidents with our homeless community. We will continue to monitor.

OFFICE DOOR: Carolyn D. has notified that this door will need be to be fixed soon.

All seems to be going well, we have been fixing problems as they arise.

David Cherf, Property Manager
cell/text: (209)489-7757

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 2024, we awarded two \$250 scholarships to Merced College students: Laura Reynoso, Nursing; and Finley Olson, Animal Science. 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.

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.

CONGREGATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Term ends May 2025

Jan Collins
Steven Hand
Mary Jo Knudsen

Term ends May 2026

Karen Arnold
David John Cherf II
Marc Medefind
Barbara Ward

Mona Kowalczyk–Treasurer & Bookkeeper
Christine Boyenga – Financial Secretary

2024-2025 Council Officers

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

*Next Meeting Date: **Tuesday, February 11, 6:00 PM***

FEBRUARY SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

To help serve the glory of God in worship - please contact Chris Boyenga, 209-759-8544 to participate as Greeter, Usher, or Reader/Assisting Minister for our 10 A.M. Sunday Worship Service.

	Sunday February 2	Sunday February 9	Sunday February 16	Sunday February 23
Greeters/ Attendance	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Pam Andersen</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>
Ushers	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Ron Basso</i>	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Ron Basso</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Tim Shaw</i>	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Mary Jo Knudsen</i>	<i>Marc Medefind</i>

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

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



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED