



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:
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.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PASTOR

Santa Claus gave us all a foundational gift to
share with our neighbors. Did you know that Santa
Claus helped form a foundational Christian
document?

Families prepare for the Christmas celebration
focused **not** upon a little baby, but an over-weight,
whiskered old man. In Christmas lore, this man was
called Saint Nicholas.

In A.D. 325, Emperor Constantine convened
the Council of Nicea. More than 300 bishops
attended to debate and establish the meaning of the
birth of the Christ child. The Council was to settle an
intense theological question about the Trinity. Bishop
Nicholas was included and became an important part
of history by his participation. (His story deserves a
review – look it up.)

At one critical point, Bishop Nicholas revealed
his “human side” by becoming so frustrated and
angry during part of the convocation that he lost his
temper and slapped the presenter. This resulted in
his imprisonment for a while.

As we revere the “jolly old elf”, the “elf” revered
God's presence and purpose within creation
wholeheartedly. As a result of this convocation,
came the foundational **Nicene Creed**.

Pastor John



PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for healing:

Dave Bettis; Joel Knox; 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, **Senior Brown Bag Program** 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 Notes

The SOV Church Council met on Monday, Nov. 17 and discussed plans for Thankfest and Advent among many other things:

1. The Thankfest is scheduled Nov. 23 after the church service. Check the sign-up poster in the narthex to make sure your favorite dish is listed. If not, you know what to bring!
2. Chris Boyenga presented information about WELCA (Women of the ELCA) in the hope that we can establish a unit at SOV. Their mission statement says, "WELCA embraces ministries that support our mission of mobilizing women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ."
3. Mary Jo Knudsen agreed to attend a meeting that night at City Council about plans for the vacant property across from our church facility. A self-storage facility and residential housing had been initially planned for the area.
4. Steve Hand asked the council to empanel a committee to handle concerns about being prepared when emergency situations arise at the church. Should someone collapse, information about that individual's emergency contact and medical info should be readily available for emergency personnel.
5. Mona Kowalczyk, treasurer, provided good news on the budget front. She said our current assets are \$211,990. Our year-to-date income is \$88,277 or approximately \$10,000 more than we budgeted while our expenditures are \$102,952, which is approximately \$7,000 under budget.
6. With Thanksgiving coming up, David Cherf II thanked church members for their generosity via the "Love Gift for the Cherf Brothers." The brothers have provided Sunday AV service to members who cannot otherwise attend. It was also noted that Carolyn Daberkow's computer was updated.
7. Pastor John Russell-Curry and Alan Arnold are looking at the church's accessibility (for wheelchairs, walkers, etc.) to discern if changes need to be made. The pastor has also received baptism requests and will once again lead our Advent study after church services.
8. Council President Marc Medefind has asked the church's landscape committee (including Chris Tomford, Chris Love, Carolyn Stevens and Marc) to get together in the very near future.

(Church Council Notes continue on Page 3.)

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Sylvia Poupard	12/07
Dave Sofranek	12/09
Eileen Fite	12/12
Erin Ward	12/15
Candice Medefind	12/16
David Bettis	12/17
Janel Wilkerson	12/26
Cary Yanagi	12/27
Lynn Tatum	12/31

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Connie McBride	01/15
Analise Gallaway	01/20
Eleanor Roduner	01/23
Jeane Hetland	01/25
Rosie Sullivan	01/25
Elizabeth Patterson	01/25
Melissa Stephens	01/26

**MONTHLY BIRTHDAY
LUNCHEON**

The birthday luncheon will not be held in December.
Watch for more information as to where we will meet in January.

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

Second Sunday of Advent

December 7

Isaiah 11:1-10
Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
Romans 15:4-13
Matthew 3:1-12

Blue

Third Sunday of Advent

December 14

Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Blue

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21

Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

Blue

First Sunday after Christmas

December 28

Isaiah 63:7-9
Psalm 148
Hebrews 2:10-18
Matthew 2:13-23

White

(Church Council News continued from Page 2.)

9. Property concerns were discussed by David Cherf II who said much of the LED lighting in the sanctuary has been replaced except for an isolated area that is more aesthetic than practical.
10. We will once again celebrate Advent and Christmas by purchasing poinsettias for the altar at a cost of \$20 per plant. Members are invited to purchase poinsettias as living or memorial honorifics. Karen Arnold is coordinator. Chris Love is coordinating the trimming and installation of the church "Chrismon" tree (a tree decorated with white and gold ornaments handmade of Christian symbols such as crosses, stars, fish, and white lights.)
11. Barb Ward, Council VP, said stewardship letters were mailed to parishioners who are urged to return them ASAP with pledged amounts for the coming year. She also noted that once pledges are counted, the Finance Committee will put together a budget for 2026. Barb counted the community baby shower as a huge success. SOV members contributed three carloads of items to the shower.
12. Carolyn Stevens is stepping back from much of the service she has consistently provided for the church because of her husband's illness. Should anyone feel called to help with the altar guild, please let Pastor John or Marc know.

POINSETTIAS

Help beautify our sanctuary this Christmas and honor special people in your life. You can order 6" Poinsettias for \$20 each. They will grace the sanctuary on Sunday, December 21 and you can take them home after the Christmas Eve service on the 24th. You can place your check/cash in a special envelope in the offering plate along with the order form or give it to Karen Arnold or the church office. Checks may be written to SOV and mark Poinsettias on the memo line.

Deadline for orders is December 7th.

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.

BENEVOLENCE OF THE MONTH

November & December Benevolence

SENIOR BROWN BAG PROGRAM

2000 W. Olive Avenue, Merced, CA 95348

Earla Anderson, Senior Brown Bag Program Manager

(209) 726-3663

email: earlaa@mmcfb.org.

The Senior Brown Bag Program provides supplemental nutritious groceries twice a month to over 3,850 seniors at 16 distribution sites in Merced and Mariposa Counties. Without the Senior Brown Bag Program, many seniors in Merced and Mariposa counties would be extremely isolated and at increased risk for malnourishment and illness.

There is no cost to the individuals served and eligibility is determined by using the federal income guidelines for poverty. The Senior Brown Bag program is designed to help those whose main source of income is Social Security, and who normally have to choose between nutritious foods and crucial medications.

Senior Brown Bag Program participants are also provided with opportunities to volunteer at their food pickup site, which offers them social connections and a sense of belonging and purpose as they contribute to the Food Bank.

Every month, more than 200 volunteers gather at the various Senior Brown Bag sites to sort, bag, and distribute food to their peers. Many participants have built new friendships and a sense of community by volunteering.

Donations, to be forwarded, may be given to Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church with Senior Brown Bag on the memo line.

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICE

"Lesson in Carols" service will be held on Wednesday, December 24, at 4 PM.

Plan on joining us for this special service as we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

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
December 15, 2025 10 AM

DECEMBER 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 December 7	Sunday December 14	Sunday December 21	Sunday December 28
Greeters/ Attendance	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>	<i>Pam Andersen</i>	<i>Chris Boyenga</i>
Ushers	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>	<i>Alan Arnold</i>	<i>Donald Gumm</i>
Reader/Assisting Ministers	<i>Bronwen Maxson</i>	<i>Tim Shaw</i>	<i>Barb Ward</i>	<i>Susan Gumm</i>

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

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
						Church Clean-up 9 AM
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom <i>After Service</i> Advent Bible Study					SOV Weekly News sent via email	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom <i>After Service</i> Advent Bible Study	Council Meeting 10 AM				SOV Weekly News sent via email	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom <i>After Service</i> Advent Bible Study			Christmas Eve Service 4 PM	Christmas Day Office Closed	SOV Weekly News sent via email	
28	29	30	31			
Worship 10 AM Sanctuary & Zoom						



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

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED