

THE VALLEY MESSENGER.

A publication of San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church

Pursuing a life with God and a life with each other by following Jesus,
thriving in community, and healing the world.

Our Values: Inclusion, Inspiration, Impact



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IT IS FOR FREEDOM THAT CHRIST HAS SET US FREE.



"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free." – Galatians 5:1

Dear SRVUMC Family,

As we step into the month of July—a time when we in this country celebrate independence and freedom—it's important for us as followers of Jesus to pause and remember the deeper freedom we are invited to embrace: the freedom we have in Christ.

The Apostle Paul reminds us in Galatians 5:1, **"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free."** This freedom isn't about doing whatever we want—it's about being released from all that

holds us back from living fully in God's love, grace, and purpose. It's a freedom from fear, from shame, from guilt, from sin. It's a freedom for love, for justice, for peace, and for service.

As we wave flags, fire up grills, and watch fireworks this Fourth of July, may we also remember that the work of freedom is not finished. We celebrate the liberties we enjoy as citizens of this country, but as United Methodists—and more importantly, as disciples of Jesus—we are also called to continue the work of ensuring freedom and dignity for **all** people. Especially in these uncertain and often chaotic times, may we be people who stand up, speak out, and live boldly for justice, inclusion, and mercy.

And speaking of celebration... we'll be gathering together on Sunday, July 6 at 5PM for a special summer edition of **The Gathering**, our casual, contemporary worship service. The theme will be centered on this very idea of **freedom**—and we'll have a festive, Fourth-of-July-style cookout afterward, complete with hot dogs, burgers, veggie options, and plenty of good conversation and connection. Come as **(continued on next page)**

(continued from previous page) you are—bring a friend, bring your appetite, bring your heart ready to worship. We'd love to see you there!

July 1 also marks a special day for United Methodist pastors—it's considered the start of a new "appointment year." And I am overjoyed to share that Bishop Sandra Olewine has reappointed me to serve another year as your pastor at SRVUMC. This begins my third year here, and I just have to say... the first two have been amazing. I've fallen absolutely in love with this community—your warmth, your passion, your faithfulness. It is truly an honor and joy to be your pastor. So, come join me on the morning of Sunday, July 6, as we give thanks together and kick off another year with hope and holy expectation. The best is yet to come!

And before I forget... thank you, thank you, thank you for all the birthday love. The cards, the texts, the Facebook posts, the gifts, the balloons—especially the big surprise during worship on June 22 when you all sang to me right before the benediction—I was completely caught off guard! So caught off guard, in fact, that I accidentally told you I was turning 47... when I actually meant to say 57. Subconscious wishful thinking? Or maybe just a little age-related

forgetfulness? Either way, I felt so deeply blessed and loved by you all.

So much to celebrate. So much to be thankful for. And so much to look forward to.

As we begin this third year together, let's lean into it with boldness, with gratitude, and with wide-open hearts—expecting God to do something new, something beautiful, something **limitless** among us.

With deep love and joyful hope,
P. Sam | syun@srvumc.org



4TH OF JULY

**INDEPENDENCE
DAY**



**“PROCLAIM LIBERTY THROUGHOUT THE LAND
TO ALL ITS INHABITANTS.”**

LEVITICUS 25:10

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINANCE UPDATE.

Thank you to all those who financially support our church! Unfortunately, our cash flow has been weak, as we are almost \$66k under budgeted income as of the end of May. We depend on your donations to sustain our church, and many of our operating expenses are fixed. Whether you are needing to catch up on your pledge commitments or moved to increase your level of giving, we ask that you prayerfully consider doing so.

With gratitude,
Jill Shibuya, Finance Chair

Year-to-Date Actual Income	Year-to-Date Budgeted Income	Shortfall
\$442k	\$508k	\$66k
Year-to-Date Actual Expenses	Year-to-Date Budgeted Expenses	Under Budget
\$417k	\$425k	\$8k
Year-to-Date Pledge Income Received	2025 Pledge Commitment	
\$346k	\$730k	

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DONATE TO THE BACKPACK DRIVE .

Donate a backpack and make an impact! From **June 22 through July 20**, you can drop off a children's backpack (**Kindergarten through 5th grade backpacks - character designed backpacks, prints or solid colors ONLY (no blue or red)**) in a bin in the narthex and help a child start the upcoming school year off right.

This backpack drive benefits Monument Crisis Center, a family resource center in Concord, CA.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

JOIN THE GATHERING JULY 6.

The Gathering is our monthly contemporary worship experience, grounded in a simple yet powerful purpose: to gather together as a community and seek God's blessings. Each service is creatively centered around a unique theme, featuring inspiring music, a heartfelt message, and the celebration of communion at Jesus' table.

The next Gathering will be **July 6 at 5PM in Wesley Center**. In the spirit of Independence Day weekend, our theme will be "Freedom in Christ"—a time to celebrate the deep and lasting freedom we find through God's grace in Jesus. After worship, stick around for a good old-fashioned cookout with hotdogs, hamburgers, and—yes—veggie options, too! All are welcome.

Scan the QR code below to donate to The Gathering fund!



The Gathering band sings energetic praise and worship music at each worship service.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

GRILL AND CHILL STARTS JULY 17.

By Brad Stribling

Well, it's that season again! No, not Advent, or Lent, but...Grill and Chill! We have long enjoyed this tradition – a chance to 'chill out' and socialize, get well nourished, and of course to be entertained. And this year we will not disappoint.

Again, we'll gather every other Thursday for four events, **beginning July 17**. We'll certainly reprise some favorites... a Hawaiian Luau, a Fiesta Grande, a Western BBQ, and...of course...Korean BBQ! And entertainment?? Well, y'gotta come find out!

Keep a watch for detailed info. We'll keep the cost the same as last several years, so see you there!

Last year's Hawaiian BBQ featured the String Alongs who serenaded the crowd with ukeleles and guitars!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

REGISTER FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL.

DATE: July 21-25, 2025

TIME: 9:30AM-12PM

**Ages: 3 (potty trained) thru Grade 5
(ages 3 years old through ages 11)**

For more information, please reach out to
Director of NextGeneration Ministries, Dr.
Karen Hernandez, at
khernandez@srvumc.org.

Got Compassion?

Join us this Summer for Vacation Bible
School!

San Ramon Valley United Methodist
Church is happy to announce this
year's Vacation Bible School,
Compassion Camp - Changing the
World with LovingKindness

Join us for 5 days of music, movement,
art, play, and so many more activities,
while your child learns about empathy,
compassion and lovingkindness.

Register your child now!

Click [here](#) to register your child or visit
[https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/
registrations/events/2864949](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2864949).

Interested in volunteering?

Click [here](#) to register to volunteer or
visit [https://
srvumc.churchcenter.com/
registrations/events/2864793](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2864793).

**Join us for Compassion Camp! Your child
will learn about empathy and compassion in
a fun and supportive environment.**



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

IN THE PEW: AMI ROWLAND.

By Sarah Stribling

Originally from New Jersey, Ami Rowland moved to California twenty-five years ago. She's lived in Contra Costa County for the past eight years. She's the eldest of three girls and her relatives live in various countries. She loves hiking, flowers, and being with friends. She adores her two sons who enjoy playing baseball and puzzles. Along with her family, Ami highly values her meaningful work as Chief Program Officer for Covenant House which serves youth experiencing homelessness.

Church involvement is relatively new for Ami. She grew up Presbyterian. Youth group played a key role in her spiritual formation and continues to influence how she shows up as a Christian in the world. Through her work with Covenant House, she met Pastor Sam who was working as a volunteer chaplain with that organization. She saw a social media post that Pastor Sam was the pastor of SRVUMC and decided to check out this church. She missed the fellowship and church music of her youth and longed to find a community where she felt like she belonged. When she attended services, she would listen to

Pastor Sam preach and felt like his messages were speaking directly to her. She felt pulled to this faith community and joined the church in October 2024.

Ami particularly enjoys attending SRVUMC's fully contemporary worship service called The Gathering. Ami has been facilitating a young family Life Group since April 2025.

Ami looks forward to deepening relationships with people in this church. She wants to expand her Life Group so more young families will feel supported. "God is still speaking," Ami adds.





LOCAL HISTORY

FROM RAILS TO TRAILS.

By Sarah Stribling

July is known for Independence Day parades. As Americans turn their attention to celebrating freedom and the signing of the Declaration of Independence, it is important to remember that historically significant deeds can be understood through the lens of local history. One of the places that is dedicated to preserving historically significant artifacts of the San Ramon Valley and telling the diverse stories of the people who used to inhabit this area is the Museum of the San Ramon Valley in downtown Danville.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the museum's

permanent exhibit showcases objects from the early days of the founding of Danville, Alamo, and San Ramon, including many railroad artifacts. The museum itself is located in a beautifully restored Southern Pacific line train depot. Extending the railroad to Danville played a significant role in developing Danville from a village to a town. This article discusses the impact of the railroad on the San Ramon Valley as well as the history of the Danville train depot.

The Railroad Comes to Town

When Leland Stanford drove the famous **(continued on next page)**

THE RAILROAD SHAPED THE LIVES OF SAN RAMON VALLEY RESIDENTS FROM 1891 TO 1978.

(continued from previous page)

golden spike that united the Central Pacific Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad together in 1869, the transcontinental railroad was complete. This engineering marvel facilitated travel nationwide. In short order, the San Ramon Valley also benefited. The railroad shaped the lives of San Ramon Valley residents from 1891 to 1978.

August Hemme (for whom Hemme Avenue in Alamo is named) championed the effort to extend the railroad branch line to Danville and San Ramon. John Hartz (Hartz Avenue's namesake) sold nearly nine acres of his ranch land to the Southern Pacific Railroad so the Danville train depot could be constructed. The train station reoriented the heart of downtown Danville from Front Street to Hartz Avenue. In 1891, identical train depots were built in Concord, Walnut Creek, Danville, and San Ramon. Of these depots, only Danville's has survived with minimal modifications throughout the decades. Still in its original form, the two-story building built to accommodate both passengers and freight was painted in faded gold

trimmed with brown. When the depot was operational, the ticket agent was stationed downstairs while the upper floor was used to load and unload the train. Originally the San Ramon Branch Line of the Southern Pacific went all the way from Martinez to San Ramon and connected to the Oakland/Tracy mainline. In 1909, the railroad was extended to Pleasanton.

When the railroad arrived, Danville's population quickly increased. The railroad facilitated passenger travel and the shipping of farm products, livestock, and other goods. The scales that were once used to weigh grain, walnuts and other goods are on display in the museum. The constant influx of passengers and residents led to the construction of new housing, hotels, and businesses. Crops including pears and walnut orchards were planted to feed the growing population.

Personal Recollections

SRVUMC church member and volunteer at the San Ramon Valley Museum Ginny Ferreira is the fifth generation of her family to live in the valley. **(continued on next page)**

“WE STAND ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE PEOPLE WHO SETTLED AND DEVELOPED THE LAND.”

(continued from previous page) Her father was the first Fire Chief of San Ramon and her grandparents owned the San Ramon General Store. Ginny recalls the train daily coming through Danville, hearing the familiar “Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!” as the railroad crossing arm descended. The Museum of the San Ramon Valley has a special place in Ginny’s heart because it “holds so much history of the [San Ramon] Valley. We stand on the shoulders of the people who settled and developed the land...I’ve always been attached to this area.”

History of the Danville Train Depot

Despite the changes that the San Ramon Valley has seen over the course of history, Danville has preserved its history. As the railroad’s importance waned in subsequent decades, the depot morphed into the Danville Feed and Grain Store in 1951. Historians have Joe Ramos and his father Joseph Sr. to thank for preserving the depot relatively unchanged. When Joe Ramon passed away in 1987, the depot was purchased by the Museum of the San Ramon Valley. In 1996, the depot was

carefully moved a few hundred feet from its original location to its current location at 205 Railroad Avenue.

From Rails to Trails

As decades passed, technological innovations like the automobile and trucks began to compete with railroads. **(continued on next page)**

Ginny Ferreira and curator of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, Beverly Lane.



THE RAILS SOON FOUND NEW LIFE IN THE FORM OF MULTI-USE TRAILS.

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Unable to match the convenience of cars, passenger train service ended in 1934. Similarly, freight trains struggled to compete with the flexibility and efficiency of trucks. Freight service was discontinued in 1978. But the story did not end there: The rails soon found new life in the form of multi-use trails.

By the 1980s, the railroad tracks were removed and eventually turned into the 30-mile-long Iron Horse Regional Trail. The trail extends from Concord in the north to Dublin in the south. The Iron Horse Trail has been designated a Millenium Trail, reflecting its important role in American history. Today the Iron Horse Trail facilitates travel and appreciation of the unique beauty and history that surrounds Danville and the San Ramon Valley. “Danville has a feel of the town I grew up in,” Ginny remarks.

Readers can learn more about the history of the depot at the Museum of the San Ramon Valley’s current exhibit titled “The Danville Depot: Creating Change, Preserving History” or on their [website, https://museumsrv.org/.](https://museumsrv.org/)

Sources

Lane, B. (2023). History of the Iron Horse Regional Trail. Museum of the San Ramon Valley. <https://museumsrv.org/history-of-theiron-horse-trail/>

Lane, B. (2006, June 30). Southern Pacific Comes to the San Ramon Valley: Part 1. Museum of the San Ramon Valley. <https://museumsrv.org/hemme-srbl/>

Lane, B. (2006, July 14). Southern Pacific Comes to the San Ramon Valley: Part 2. Museum of the San Ramon Valley. <https://museumsrv.org/hemme-srbl/>

Museum of the San Ramon Valley. The History of the Danville Depot. <https://museumsrv.org/post-1260/>



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

JOIN THE NEW EARTH CARE MEDITATION GROUP.

By Sylvia Benzler and Ginny Ferreira

In addition to the Earth Care Hiking Group, we also have a new meditation-in-nature group that will meet monthly. **This month we'll be meeting July 18th at 9AM in the prayer garden at church.** Chairs will be provided. We will have a reading to start with. Then we will disperse or sit, or walk to meditate and pray. Finally, those who want to will gather to share briefly about what they've noticed and learned. All of this will last 75-90 minutes.

Starting in September, we are happy to report that Ginny Ferreira, who has extensive experience in contemplation and movement meditation, will begin guiding the group. Please let us know of any questions or suggestions you might have, as we feel our way into a holy, wholistic time of communing with God and each other in nature! **Everyone is welcome! No previous experience necessary!**

For more information, contact:
lucinda.huffaker@gmail.com.

The prayer garden is a peaceful place to contemplate life and listen to God's voice.

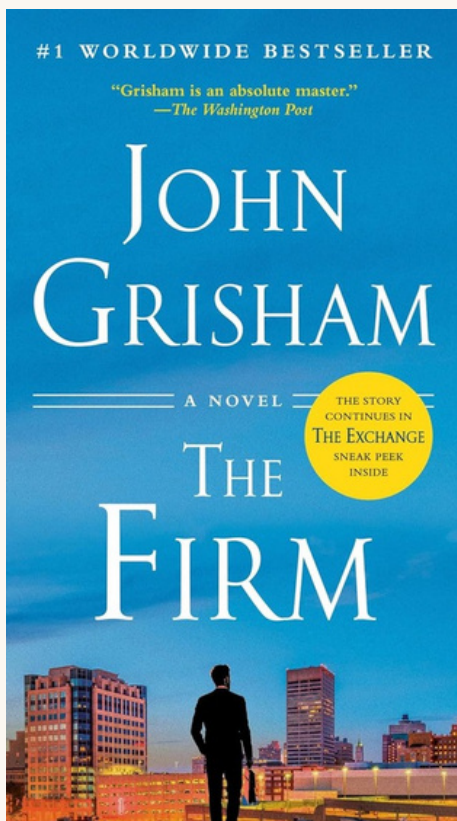


BETWEEN THE BOOKENDS.



SUNNY SUMMER READING

Welcome **July** and the hot days of summer. **Relax** around a pool, on the beach or your backyard with a good book.



Grisham, John. The Firm.

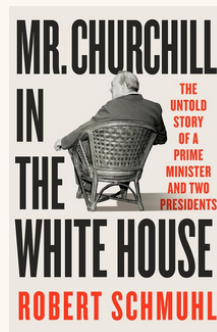
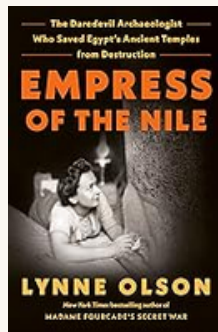
For all of you avid readers of John Grisham's books, you will recall that his novel, *The Exchange* is based on his much older book, *The Firm*, which put Tom Cruise into stardom. In *The Firm*, Mitch McDeere has recently graduated from Harvard and has been looking at law firms in and around New York, specifically Wall Street. He has had interviews and offers when Bendini, Lambert and Locke call to speak to him. They are solely a tax firm, and Mitch excelled in tax law and securities, besides graduating in the top five of his class.

These attributes make him extremely appealing to this law firm. At the end of his meeting, a huge monetary offer is made along with a BMW, assistance with a mortgage for a home, membership to country clubs and other perks. Mitch and Abby, his wife, are astonished and impressed with their future income and different lifestyle. What they do not realize at the time is not everything is perfect. The law firm, based in Memphis, Tennessee, is actually very crooked and secretly works for **(continued on next page)**

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

(continued from previous page) the mafia. Little do they know that their home and car will be bugged by the firm so it will know if Mitch ever suspects anything and begins to discuss it with Abby. When he does, that's when the intrigue sets in and keeps the reader involved to the very end.

These **books** are **missing!** Please look for them – perhaps you simply forgot to return them.

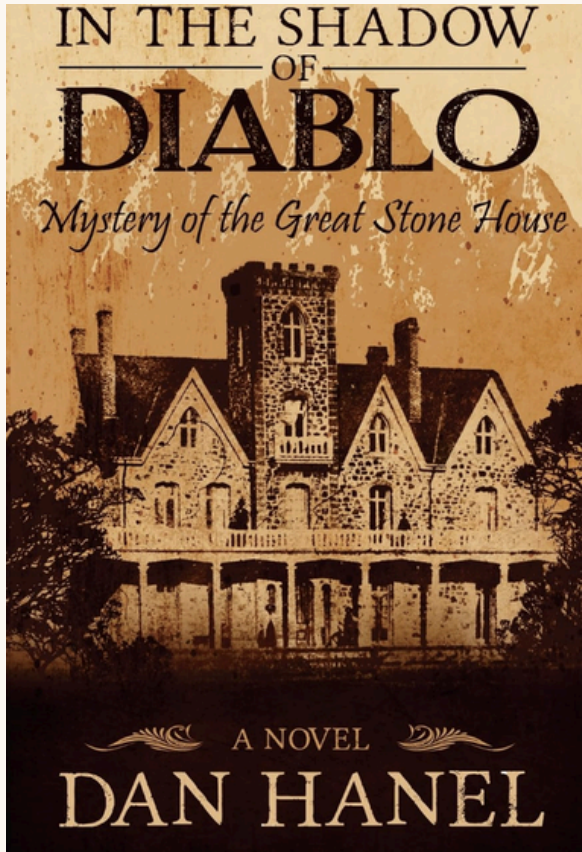


The Mystery of Mrs. Christie
Wouldn't Take Nothing for my Journey Now
The Spy who Loved Me
A Dog's Way Home
A Dog's Purpose
The Last Castle
Constable on the Hill
Camino Ghosts

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP.

THIRD MONDAY OF THE MONTH AT 1 PM IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY.



NEXT BOOK SELECTION: IN THE SHADOW OF DIABLO.

July 21 we will share our thoughts about In the Shadow of Diablo: Mystery of the Great Stone House by Dan Hanel. There are lots of mysteries and discoveries to make about our area.

Click [here](#) to buy the book or go to <https://www.amazon.com/Shadow-Diablo-Mystery-Great-Stone/dp/1475082924>.

Contact [Jenny Swanson](#) (jenny.swanson646@gmail.com) for more information.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Daniel Dunn, Director of the Museum of the San Ramon Valley, gave an informative presentation in June. Photo credit: Terry Bailey.



July's Lunch with Friends will feature a variety of ballpark hotdogs and other ballpark food.

POTLUCK & PRESENTATION TUESDAY, JULY 1ST, 11:45AM, WESLEY CENTER

Join us for a special presentation from our very own Gerry Carothers. She will be speaking about life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Please bring a dish to share or pick something up on your way over. Whatever works for you! We always have plenty of food, it's your company that makes the gathering special!

LUNCH WITH FRIENDS TUESDAY, JULY 15TH, NOON, WESLEY CENTER

Please join us for this always popular luncheon to enjoy ballpark hotdogs, including Chicago Dogs, Coney Island Dogs, Hawaiian dogs, Corndogs and all the other great ballpark fun foods (roasted peanuts and garlic fries)! Batter up!

AUGUST SCHEDULE

Save the date for Tuesday, **August 5th, Potluck & Presentation** and Tuesday, **August 19th, Lunch with Friends.**

OUT INTO THE WORLD

VOLUNTEER AT WHITE PONY EXPRESS.

Volunteers are needed on **August 7th from 11AM to 1PM** to make goodie bags at White Pony Express. Click [here](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2981499) to sign up on Church Center or visit <https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/2981499>.

Now at their new location in Concord, White Pony Express was started by Dr. Carol Weyland Connor in 2013 to address the terrible disconnect between food waste in the United States and hunger and poor nutrition.

She began a “food rescue” program, delivering surplus high-quality food to local organizations serving those in need. White Pony Express grew as volunteers offered time and equipment and other organizations and individuals raised money for equipment like refrigerated trucks. As of 2024, the food rescue program has saved over four million pounds of high-quality and largely perishable food from grocers, retailers, restaurants and wholesalers and served 130,000 people in Contra Costa County. Volunteers and staff sort and deliver nutritious foodstuffs

to receiving organizations in refrigerated vehicles the same day. Recipients of the deliveries are never charged a fee for these deliveries.

Volunteers pose after a making care packages for people in hospitals.
Photo credit: Jerry Ricker.



OUT INTO THE WORLD

FOOD BANK TEAM MAKES AN IMPACT.

Last month's outing to the food bank was a success! Eighteen volunteers recently volunteered to sort and pack fruit and vegetables at the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. The volunteers had a positive experience. It was a meaningful way to contribute to a significant need and make an impact for families right here in Contra Costa County.

Special thanks to Brad Stribling for taking these photos!



CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Don Field
- 6 Xan Alexander
- 7 Brenda Domergue
Fred Toney
- 9 Caroline Gross
- 10 Alex Baker
Kate Baker
Shannon Dever
Vin Hirsch **(97)**
Kathy Kennedy
- 11 Marti Starnes
- 12 Linda Ashcraft
Amelie Sepull
- 15 Gloria Holleman
Briggs Wood
- 16 Melissa Stroin
- 17 Steve McAdams
- 17 Caroline Walsh
Amy Riedel
- 19 Judy Baker
Steve Osborn
- 20 John Hemmerich
- 21 Carol Fhlug
Harry Hanover **(98)**
Ginger McGuffin
Bill Rust
- 25 Rich Lowther
- 26 Bill Sabin **(98)**
- 27 Langley Choy
Jerry Ricker
Brian Thiessen
- 28 Brian Stocking
- 29 Karen Hernandez
- 30 Randy Slinger
- 31 Gail Soldavini

ANNIVERSARIES

- 2 Bonnie & Brian Roberts **(59)**
- 5 Carol & John Sayers **(62)**
- 6 Kathleen & Kevin Isbell
- 6 Judy & Randy Slinger **(51)**
- 7 Teresa Fimby-Christensen & Randy Christensen
- 7 Suzanne & Jerry Ricker
- 8 Pam & Alan Christian
- 8 Jane & John VanderWerf
- 9 Linda & Curtis Jimerson
- 12 Helen & Bob Sinclair **(66)**
- 16 Rebecca & Roger Ten Elshof
- 17 Trudy & Larry Pasquale
- 20 Katy & Gregg Mannell
- 21 Tim & Megan Buckley
- 21 Nancy & John Harrison
- 21 Alice Anthony & Alex Iantano
- 23 Marianne & Bruce Templeton
- 28 Beverly & Steve McAdams
- 31 Marci & Kelly Milligan



AMONG OURSELVES.



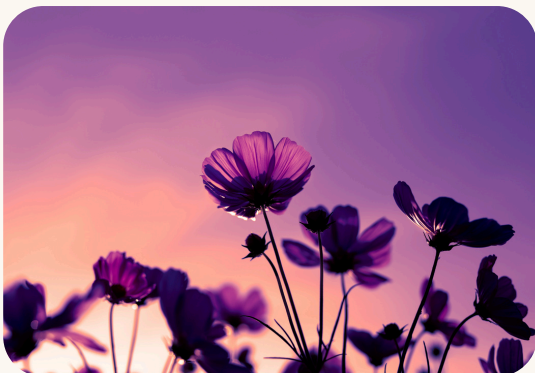
HEALTH CONCERNS

Kay Jones, Jeff Lang, Mary Nelson, Jo Ann Hirsch, Melanie and Boyd Hasik, Adam Kennedy, Lonnie Bristow, Judy Slinger, Carol Fhlug, Isabel D'Elia, Andrea Bourgeois, Teri Hawk, Julie Klug's nephew Taylor, Chris Hoff, ClaudeC Johannesen, Shana Carroll.



CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR

All those who live with long-term illness, those recovering from COVID-19, unemployment, life decisions, and sickness in their families.



OUR SYMPATHY

To the family of Dave McWilliams on the passing of his mother, Barb.

NEVER MISS AN ISSUE!

The Valley Messenger is delivered right to your inbox. Stay connected with all things SRVUMC, and read interviews, book reviews, and more.

Check out our website to keep up with church happenings, sign up for upcoming events and groups, and read our newsletter anytime, anywhere.



OUR TEAM

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SAN RAMON VALLEY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

