



SAN RAMON VALLEY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

JANUARY 2026

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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A NEW SERIES FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

¹³Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,¹⁴ I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ~ Philippians 3:1-14

As we step into a brand-new year, my heart is full of gratitude and anticipation. It is truly a joy and a privilege to serve as your pastor, and I want you to know how thankful I am for the trust you place in me to help lead San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church into another year of ministry, mission, and discipleship. Every new year feels like a gift from God—a fresh chapter filled with possibility—and I begin 2026 deeply grateful and genuinely excited for what lies ahead for our church.

A new year always brings new expectations. For me, it brings a renewed commitment to give my very best to lead our congregation toward greater growth and greater fruit.

Growth not just in numbers, but growth in faith. Fruit not just in activity, but fruit that reflects transformed lives, deeper love, courageous witness, and faithful obedience. My prayer is that 2026 would be a year in which we move forward together—more rooted in Christ, more devoted to one another, and more attentive to the work God longs to do in and through us.

That spirit of intention and commitment is what inspired the new sermon series that I will be launching on the first Sunday of January:

Choose This Day: Seven Daily Habits That Will Bless Your Life. The title comes from Joshua's challenge to the Israelites as they stood on the threshold of the Promised Land: "Choose this day whom you will serve." It is a reminder that spiritual growth does not happen accidentally. It happens through daily, faithful choices.

While many of us begin the year with resolutions or a focus word—and those can certainly be helpful—this series goes deeper. It invites us to choose daily spiritual habits that can truly (**continued on next page**)

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reshape our lives. The quality of our lives, after all, is often determined by the sum of the choices we make. These seven habits are not quick fixes; they are practices we can return to again and again in 2026 and beyond—habits that, by God’s grace, will bless and change us.

Here is a brief overview of the journey we will take together:

ABIDE (John 15:1–11)

We begin with the foundational habit of abiding in Christ. Jesus reminds us that He is the true Vine and we are the branches. When we choose daily to remain connected to Him—through prayer, Scripture, and intentional presence—we discover that fruitfulness is not something we manufacture; it flows naturally from staying connected to our life source. Rather than abiding in fear, distraction, or complacency, we choose to abide in Jesus.

BREAK (Romans 6:11–14; 7:14–25)

Spiritual growth also requires honest confrontation with the habits and patterns that hold us back. Paul names the inner struggle we all know so well: doing what we don’t want to do. The good news is that, in Christ, sin no longer has the final word. Each day we can choose to break free from destructive habits by surrendering them to God’s grace and power.

COVER (Ephesians 6:10–20)

Paul reminds us that our lives of faith are lived in the midst of spiritual battle. This habit calls us to intentionally “put on” the full armor of God each day—truth, righteousness, faith, salvation, the Word, and prayer. We do not face life unprotected; we face it clothed in God’s strength.

DARE (Genesis 12:1–5; Matthew 14:22–33)

Faith often requires risk. Abram stepping into the unknown and Peter stepping out of the boat both remind us that “playing it safe” can sometimes be the most dangerous choice of all. This habit invites us to dare to trust God, to take faithful steps of obedience, and to live with holy courage.

EXPECT (Matthew 7:7–11; Matthew 17:14–20)

What we expect from God shapes how we pray and how we live. Jesus teaches us to ask, seek, and knock with confidence in a loving Father. This habit challenges us to begin each day expecting God to act—to heal, to restore, to move mountains—and to pray bold prayers rooted in faith.

FIX (Philippians 3:12–14; Hebrews 12:1–3)

In a noisy and distracting world, focus is a spiritual discipline. This habit calls us to fix our eyes on Jesus—to pursue Him with **(continued on next page)**

intention and perseverance. What we look at shapes our souls, and keeping our focus on Christ strengthens us to keep running the race set before us.

GROW (Psalm 1:1–6; Ephesians 4:11–16)

We conclude by embracing a growth mindset rooted in Scripture and community. Like trees planted by streams of water, we are called to stay rooted in God's Word, connected to one another, and actively serving. Growth is both personal and communal as we mature together into Christ's likeness.

My hope and prayer for 2026 is that these habits will not simply be sermon topics, but real daily practices that draw us closer to Jesus and to one another. I am excited for this new year, grateful for each of you, and honored to walk this journey of faith together. May we truly choose this day—and every day—to follow where God leads.

With Great Hope,
P. Sam | syun@srvumc.org

CHOOSE THIS DAY

Seven Daily Habits That Will Bless Your Life



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NEW CONCERT SERIES DEBUTS JANUARY 10.

Join us on Saturday, January 10 at 6 PM in the Wesley Center for our soft launch of our brand new **ELEVATED CONNECTION Concert Series**. We will be featuring the Cornerstone Band of Silicon Valley. Come and enjoy an evening of great music, delicious food, and awesome community!





SAN RAMON VALLEY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
PRESENTS

elevated CONNECTION

CONCERT SERIES
AT WESLEY CENTER

SATURDAY, JANUARY 10, 2026
DOORS OPEN 6:00 PM

**FEATURING CORNERSTONE BAND
OF SILICON VALLEY**

**FREE WILL DONATION
ACCEPTED AT THE DOOR**

FOOD & DRINKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

902 Danville Blvd, Alamo, CA 94507
www.srvumc.org



SAN RAMON VALLEY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VOLUNTEER FOR TRINITY CENTER MEALS.

By Peggy Crawford

As we have done for the past three years, groups from our church will provide evening meals to Trinity Center, the respite center for unhoused people in Walnut Creek. We have quite a history with Trinity Center, with groups having served Friday lunches there for several years in the past.

Meals will be prepared in our kitchen and delivered to Trinity Center. After the meal, the Trinity Center participants will spend the night in a warm secure location.

Sign up to lead a small group of 3-5 people to cook and serve in this important outreach opportunity. The dates are every Friday from January 9 through February 27.

We hope for a robust and rewarding participation again this year.

Questions? Contact Peggy Crawford at pcraw2164@gmail.com for more information.

Earlier this year the Stephen Ministers prepared and delivered warm meals to Trinity Center in Walnut Creek.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

PLAYERS NEEDED FOR CHURCH PICKLEBALL.

Join the SRVUMC Pickleball Group for indoor play on Wednesdays from 6:30–8PM and Sundays from 3–5PM in the climate-controlled Activity Recreation Center (ARC) with three courts. New players can learn from experienced members during special sessions held once or twice every month or two. Extra rackets are available if you need one.

If you're interested in joining us, please contact [Larry Pasquale](#) at larry_pasquale@hotmail.com for more information and preparation details.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMMUNICATIONS GUIDELINES.

At SRVUMC, our Communications Department and Staff are dedicated to supporting the life and mission of our church. We want every ministry, program, and special event to receive the visibility it deserves so that people are informed, engaged, and inspired to participate. To achieve this, we depend on the partnership of ministry leaders to follow these guidelines. Doing so ensures consistency, excellence, and strong brand recognition across all church communications.

1. Promotion of Church Events

Our primary communication platforms (Friday Memo, monthly newsletter, social media, website, and campus signage) are designed to promote SRVUMC events and programs. Outside organizations, including nonprofits, will not be promoted unless explicitly approved by the Pastor and the Director of Communications.

2. Event Scheduling

To avoid conflicts and double-bookings, all events must first be approved by the Facilities Manager before they can be added to the church calendar. Only SRVUMC-specific events that are officially scheduled will be promoted by the Communications Department. Because campus scheduling is complex, please ensure you begin this process early.

3. Information Required for Promotion

For accurate and effective promotion, please email the following details to media@srvumc.org:

- Event title
- Day, time, and location
- Contact person (name & email/phone)
- Cost (if applicable)

Incomplete submissions will be referred back to the event contact for clarification.

4. Editorial Oversight

Event contacts are expected to draft blurbs or articles for their respective events. However, the Communications Staff has final editorial authority over all church communications. This includes text, titles, logos, images, photos, and multimedia. Edits may be made to ensure clarity, consistency, and alignment with church branding. **(continued on next page)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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5. Authorized Design & Promotion

The Communications Staff is authorized to determine what, when, where, and through which platforms events are promoted. To maintain consistent branding, members and ministry leaders should not produce their own logos, flyers, postcards, or social media posts for official church communication. Digital and physical promotional materials will be created by the Communications Department as appropriate.

6. Image Use & Copyright

All images used in church communications must either be:

- Original photos taken at church events and submitted to media@srvumc.org, or
- Public domain/copyright-free images.

This ensures SRVUMC remains in compliance with copyright laws.

7. Balanced Promotion

Event promotion will be scheduled in the broader context of all upcoming church activities. The Communications Department will work to balance visibility among multiple events happening within the same time frame.

8. Flyers & Campus Placement

The Communications Staff is authorized to decide whether a flyer will be created for an event, and where (if at all) it will be placed on the church campus.

9. Communication Contact Person

When a group (such as a small group, class, or committee) wishes to promote an event, one designated person should serve as the contact with the Communications Department. This helps streamline communication and ensures accuracy.

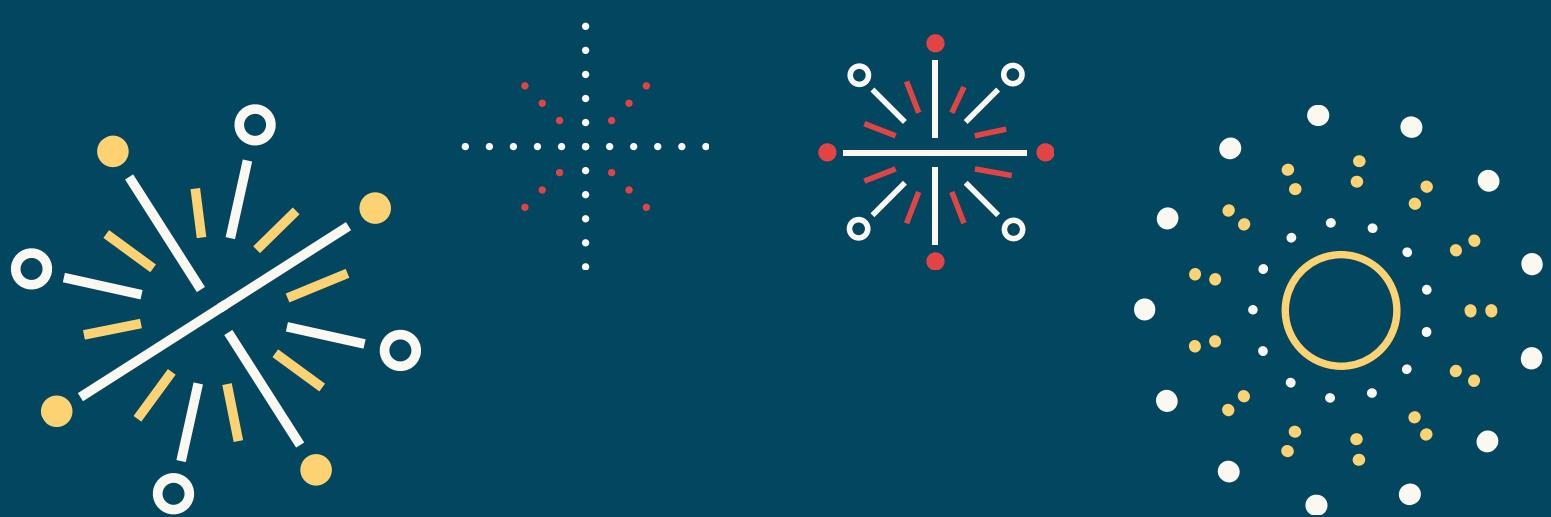
10. Submission Deadlines

- Friday Memo: Submissions due each Wednesday by 4:00 PM.
- Monthly Newsletter: Submissions due on the 15th of each month.

Late submissions may not be included unless approved by the Senior Pastor.

By following these guidelines, we work together to ensure that SRVUMC events and ministries are communicated with clarity, professionalism, and consistency—so that the life of our church continues to shine brightly in our community.

For any questions or concerns, please reach out to the Director of Communications or to the Senior Pastor.



SRVUMC Wishes You A

HAPPY NEW YEAR'S DAY

January 1st, 2026

Jeremiah 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”



IN THE PEW: RICK MCGUIRE.

By Sarah Stribling

Sports and church have played an integral role in Rick McGuire's life. Born on a dairy farm in the small town of Salem, New York, basketball played a salient role in Rick's rural hometown. Basketball brought the community together. "The gym was packed every game," Rick remarks.

During his high school and college years, Rick noted the different coaching styles' impact on a team's ability to win. Incensed with his high school basketball coach's bullying, Rick resolved to become the best coach he possibly could.

His first year as a high school math teacher, Rick began a cross-country team. Starting with nine kids, the program blossomed into a 35-strong coed team. Taking inspiration from his previous coaches, his coaching philosophy focused on gradual improvement rather than winning or losing. An expert in the coaching field, Rick went on to earn a doctorate in sports psychology from University of Virginia. One of his proudest achievements is coaching two of his track athletes in the Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs.

Growing up, "Sundays meant church," Rick notes. Rick attended a weekly Presbyterian youth fellowship. After moving to the Bay Area in 2020 to be closer to his adult children, he attended Sunday worship at SRVUMC. He remembers Bill Rust welcoming him. Rick and his wife Jane joined the church the following year.

Rick is currently a member of the Men's Faith Sharing group while Jane shepherds a Life Group that focuses on intentional discipleship. "I'm a coach. I'm proud to be a coach," Rick adds. "[The philosophy of] positive coaching is a product of what would Jesus do."



BETWEEN THE BOOKENDS.



GRATITUDE FOR GOOD BOOKS!

The library committee wishes all a **Happy New Year** full of happiness, excellent health and hours of enjoyable reading. Let us remember this year to practice our Methodist teachings of being kind to one another, not only in deed but also in word, and to be as generous as possible. A good resolution would be to read six books this year. Again, **Happy New Year** to all!

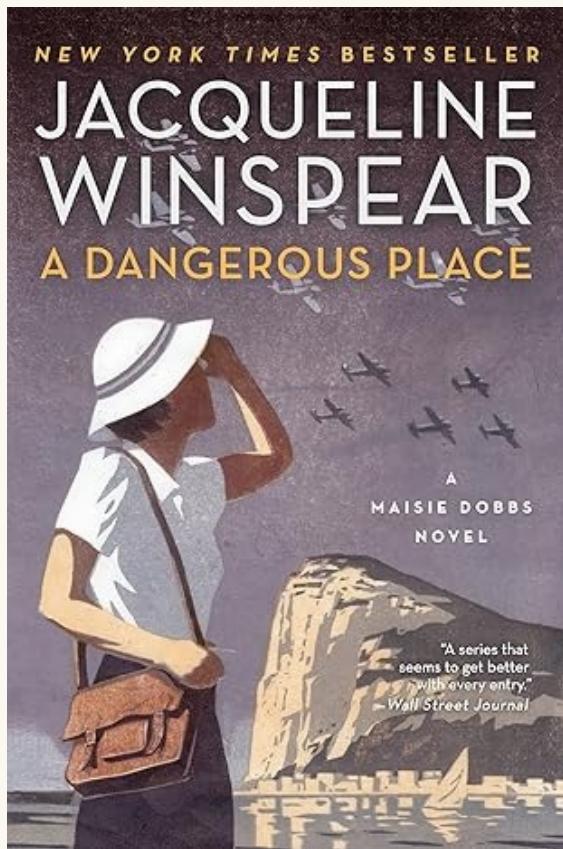
In A Dangerous Place by Jacqueline Winspear, the author takes Maisie to Gibraltar where she intends to remain until she feels she can resume her life in England after experiencing and enduring a most heart shattering event. It is while she is shipbound for home, that she realizes she must have some quiet peaceful time alone to recover from the terrible loss of her husband and the miscarriage of a son. She knows she cannot be surrounded by grieving family and friends.

When the ship stops at Gibraltar, she informs the captain that she wants to disembark. Out of concern for her safety, he disapproves of her request. When she explains her reasons, he then advises her to stay at the finest hotel for her safety and comfort. She is a wealthy lady and alone. After spending one night there, she seeks and finds lodging at a nearby home with meals, if wanted. Maisie is perfectly content with her decision knowing she will now have the solace she needs for her anxieties.

Being the English (continued on next page)

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

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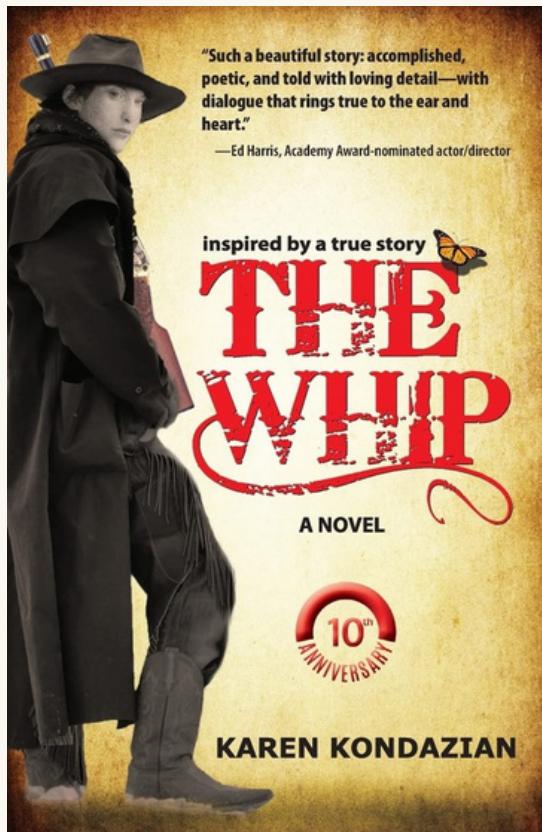
woman that she is, Maisie dons her walking shoes and goes out for her early evening stroll. It is during one of these walks that she stumbles over a body. After notifying the authorities, she learns that nothing will be done to pursue how this young man was killed. It was recorded as a random robbery. Being an investigator, Maisie decides to undertake the mystery of why this young photographer was killed.

Many other events have been arousing her senses to the point of her wondering if she should contact her friends at Scotland Yard. She does not like hearing and knowing German planes are flying over. Will Maisie be successful in solving her questions? This is another intriguing book in the Maisie Dobb series.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP.

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



NEXT BOOK SELECTION: THE WHIP.

On **January 26th**, we will discuss The Whip by Karen Kondazian. This is historical fiction on the life of Charlie Parkhurst. Beginning life as an orphan, it covers life in the era of stage drivers and more.

Click [here](#) to buy the book or go to <https://www.amazon.com/Whip-novel-inspired-Charley-Parkhurst/dp/1601823029>.

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

January 19th

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY

“The time is always right to do right.”

~ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

What will you do to honor Dr. King's legacy and help heal the world that God so loves?



THANK YOU, ANGELS OF SRVUMC!

Our Angel Trees were covered with tags inviting our community to step up and make Christmas wishes come true. It is our church tradition to have an Angel Tree but when asked why...the answer is simple: Helping others, giving generously without any expectation of a personal thank you represents the Christmas Spirit. Giving unconditionally certainly feels good.

This year our **Missions Committee** put all their support behind the Angel Tree to help us not only meet our goals but **surpass them!** Happily, we were able to fulfill all requests and thanks to donations, we were able to meet additional needs. This year Angel Tree provided **240 gifts (a value of over \$8,400)** to the agencies we sponsored. We were able to make an additional donation of **\$300** to both Fred Finch and Trinity Center. We also sponsored a family of six and six seniors from Hope Solutions. Thank you one and all! A special thanks to all the Harvest Festival participants for your generous monetary donation. We also appreciated the donations from Gail Smith and Shannon Dever who contributed many hand made items for our baskets for STAND!.

The following agencies send their deepest gratitude to all the angels of SRVUMC. We provided:

Fred Finch- 2 gifts for each child housed in the residential program as well as money for holiday festivities and needed supplies for game/craft rooms.

Trinity Center- sleeping bags, back packs and gift cards for 15 unhoused people.

Hope Solutions- gifts and meals for 7 families and 6 seniors.

STAND!- baskets for the 5 families housed at the shelter and 2 boxes of supplies for their boutique. The boutique gives individuals the ability to choose items when they arrive at the shelter with little or nothing.

Fostering Wishes- 45 gifts for foster children.

Many hours and many volunteers helped make this project successful. Your Angel Tree Coordinators are most grateful to you all for participating and supporting this mission project. Your halos are glowing.

Beth McClelland, RI, Linda Green and Nancy Garnick

OUT INTO THE WORLD

ANGEL TREE 2025.

The Angel Tree Committee is grateful to all the angels of SRVUMC who donated Angel Tree gifts this year! Your donated gifts support five local nonprofits. In total, SRVUMC gave 240 gifts to families and individuals who would otherwise go without. Thank you so much for your generosity!

Check out photos from this year's Angel Tree. Special thanks to Beth McClelland for providing these photos!



OUT INTO THE WORLD

CHURCH CHRISTMAS CONCERT.

Nothing brings the Christmas spirit to life like a cheerful concert! Last month's church Christmas concert was no exception. Thank you to the many music ensembles who made this year's Christmas concert a fun and memorable event. Special thanks to Jeff Howe, for directing Living Water, Chancel Choir, and being the emcee, Teri Hawk, for directing the String Alongs, and Winnie Stribling for directing the Carillon Bell Choir.



CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

1 Marilyn Clarke
3 Ethan Helms
 Brian Roberts
4 Rebecca Ten Elshof
6 Nancy Amini
9 Terry Bailey
 Conner Merchant
10 Chris Hoff
11 Frances Stephenson
12 Amanda Thomas
13 Bill Nelson **(93)**
14 Nancy Tiedemann
 Mark Warwick
15 Julian Bybel
 Liz George
 Shadaab Kanwal
 Dory Schramm

16 Peggy Pierce
17 Gerry Carothers **(99)**
18 Mike Kelly
 Gail Smith
 Tania Moore-Bolstad
20 Nancy Garnick
23 Jan Foulds
25 Grace Benzler
 Roger Ehlers
28 Bill Dever
 Nancy Harrison
29 Dave Bridges
30 Alicia Rossini
 Deirdree Walsh-Krumrei
31 Lisa Chapman

ANNIVERSARIES

5 Judy & Bob Baker
11 Nadia & Bruce Koliha
29 Danni & Dan Sherman



AMONG OURSELVES.



HEALTH CONCERNS

Kay Jones, Jeff Lang, Mary Nelson, Melanie and Boyd Hasik, Adam Kennedy, Lonnie Bristow, Carol Fhlug, Isabel D'Elia, Andrea Bourgeois, Julie Klug's nephew Taylor, Chris Hoff, ClaudeC Johannesen, Pastor Sam's parents, Jan Anderson and Bill Sabin.



CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR

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



OUR SYMPATHY

To the Carroll family on the passing of Shana.

To Karen Hernandez and her family on the passing of her father, Alfredo.

To Steve Garnick and Anne Kuelz and their families on the passing of their mother, Jan.

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

Pastor Sam Yun: syun@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x108

Patsy Kyles, Executive Assistant to the Pastor: pkyles@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x100

Laura Roy, HR / Office Manager: ljroy@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x106

Karen Hernandez, Director of NextGen Ministry: khernandez@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x109

Tania Moore-Bolstad, Youth Ministry Coordinator: tmooresrvumc.org

Priya Gupta, Lead Accountant: pgupta@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x105

Michelle Cooke, Accounts Receivable Specialist: mcooke@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x102

Susan Madden, Accounts Payable & Payroll Specialist & Facilities Specialist: smadden@srvumc.org
(925) 837-5243 x114

Christine Pezza, Preschool Director: cpezza@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x113

Jeffrey Howe, Director of Music Ministry: jhowe@srvumc.org

Katie Hawk, Music Ministry Intern: khawk@srvumc.org

Alex Maddux, Communications Intern: amaddux@srvumc.org

Sarah Stribling, Director of Communications: sstribling@srvumc.org

902 Danville Blvd. Alamo, CA 94507
Office Hours: Weekdays 9:30AM-3:30PM
Phone: (925) 837-5243

srvumc.org
[@sanramonvalleyumc](https://www.instagram.com/sanramonvalleyumc)



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