

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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BEGIN LENT WITH INTENTION THIS FEBRUARY.

“Even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.” Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and he relents from sending calamity. ~Joel 2:12-13

Dear SRVUMC Family,

Somehow, February has arrived again—and I don’t know about you, but for me it feels like it crept up on us while we weren’t looking. One minute we’re still easing into the New Year, and the next thing we know the calendar is full, the pace has picked up, and February is already demanding our attention in ways that we don’t really feel prepared for.

This is the month of Super Bowl Sunday, Valentine’s, and—almost hiding in plain sight—the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday on February 18. Chips and commercials. Chocolate and romance. And then, suddenly, ashes and repentance. Lent doesn’t arrive with fireworks or fanfare or with a lot of warning. It slips in quietly, interrupting our routines, tapping us

on the shoulder, and saying, “**Okay, now is the time.**”

As such, Lent rarely feels convenient or well-timed. It certainly doesn’t wait until life slows down or things feel more manageable. It shows up when we’re busy, distracted, and already juggling too much. Lent sneaks up on us—and maybe that’s exactly why we need this season for the well-being of our spiritual lives.

We will begin this season with our Ash Wednesday service, a solemn and sacred gathering where we pause, tell the truth about our lives, and receive the imposition of ashes. These ashes—marked on our foreheads in the shape of the cross—connect us with centuries of Christian practice rooted in Scripture. In the Bible, ashes symbolize humility, repentance, grief, and our deep dependence on God. They remind us of a truth we often try very hard to avoid: **we are not invincible, we are not eternal, and we are not in control.**

Which, in a strange and grace-filled way, is exactly the good news.

continued on next page)

(continued from previous page) Ash Wednesday speaks honestly in a culture that prefers to stay busy, polished, and put together. It gently but firmly reminds us: you are human. You are finite. You are dust—and you are deeply loved. And yes, there is always a bit of holy humor mixed in. You will leave church marked with ashes and immediately face the annual Ash Wednesday questions: **Is this smudge still there? Is it crooked? Does it look intentional—or like I leaned against a fireplace?** And of course, the classic dilemma: **Do I keep the ashes on all day as a witness to my faith... or did I already accidentally just wipe them off five minutes earlier while reaching for my phone?**

Either way, the ashes are not about appearances. They are about belonging—to God, to grace, and to the hope that even from dust, God brings new life. That is why the Church has always understood Lent not as some sort of vague spiritual mood, but as a deliberate season—a time set apart with purpose. Lent interrupts us on purpose. It creates space on purpose. It invites us to stop drifting and start paying attention again—to our lives, our habits, our hearts, and our relationship with God.

And because this season can so easily slip by without intention, we are approaching Lent this year with a clear and intentional plan—one that invites us to walk together rather than

each trying to figure it out on our own.

This Lent, our congregation will journey together through a church-wide Lenten study based on the book Freeing Jesus by Diana Butler Bass. This thoughtful and engaging book invites us to rediscover Jesus beyond the narrow or overly familiar images we may have picked up over time. Bass explores different ways Jesus has been understood—friend, teacher, savior, Lord, way, presence—and encourages us to encounter Christ not as a distant religious figure, but as living, present, and active in our lives today. Freeing Jesus is not about leaving Jesus behind; it is about removing the assumptions and limitations that can quietly shrink our faith. Our Sunday morning sermon series during Lent will coincide with this reading, allowing worship, Scripture, and small-group conversation to reinforce one another. This shared rhythm gives us a way to practice Lent together—intentionally, thoughtfully, and with depth.

I encourage you to pick up a copy of the book from your favorite bookseller soon, so you'll be ready to join one of the many groups that will be following along for this season. If you need help connecting with a group, please don't hesitate to let me know—I would be glad to help. And if you're looking for a place to begin, you are always welcome to join me on Tuesday **(continued on next page)**

(continued from previous page) mornings at 10:30 AM for our Pastor's Bible Study group.

Since Lent has a way of sneaking up on us, how about I pose a question before you that is simple but meaningful and will help you get a good start:

What kind of Lenten discipline are you planning to take on this year?

What might you give up? What might you take on? Maybe it's chocolate (a classic). Maybe it's social media (a bold move in February). Or maybe it's not about giving something up at all, but about adding something life-giving—more prayer, more Scripture, more intentional time with God, or more compassion toward others and yourself. Whatever you choose, remember this: Lent is not about spiritual self-punishment or religious productivity. It is about creating space—space to listen, to repent, to be renewed, and to walk more closely with Jesus.

My prayer is that this Lent would not simply pass us by unnoticed, but that it would shape us—drawing us closer to Jesus and deeper in relationship with him. May this holy season interrupt us in all the right ways, slow us down just enough to notice God's presence, and lead us again toward the life God desires for us.

Looking Forward To Journeying With You,

P. Sam | syun@srvumc.org



**JOIN US FOR OUR
ASH WEDNESDAY
SERVICE
FEBRUARY 18, 2026
at 7:00 PM
IN THE
SANCTUARY**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

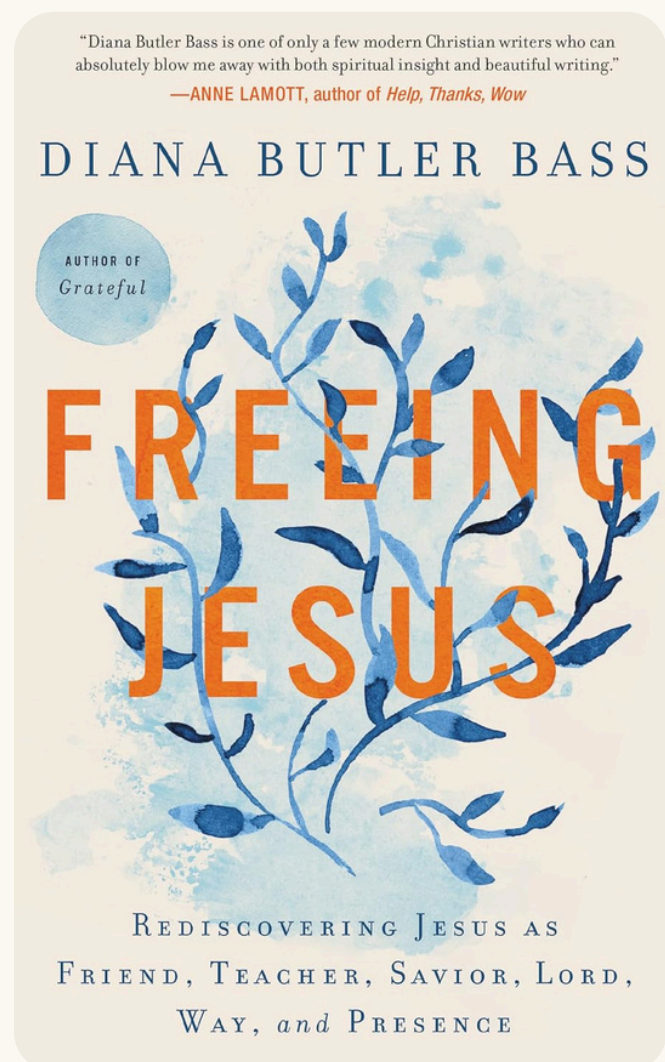
LENTEN STUDY BEGINS FEBRUARY 18.

By Bill Rust

Plan ahead. Get your study book now wherever you buy books (like [Amazon](#) or [cokesbury.com](#)): Diana Butler Bass, **FREEING JESUS: Rediscovering Jesus as Friend, Teacher, Savior, Lord, Way and Presence.**

Pastor Sam's Lent sermons will explore major themes of the book. Buy a book and follow along with your own independent study or, even better, join in a group study.

Questions or more information? Ask Pastor Sam, syun@srvumc.org.





BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY 2026

ANNOUNCEMENTS

FINANCE Q & A FEBRUARY 15.

Our Finance Committee is hard at work in trying to manage and steward the financial resources of our church. As part of this effort, we will be providing regular updates on the state of our budget. Please see below for our financial summaries for November and December 2025. We are grateful for your generous and faithful giving that supports all of the ministries of SRVUMC.

Finance Update - Year to Date as of 11/30/25:

\$817k Total Income
\$926k Total Expenses
(\$109k) Net Loss

Finance Update - Year to Date as of 12/31/25:

\$952k Total Income
\$1000k Total Expenses
(\$48k) Net Loss

Please join us for a Special Finance Update and Q&A Session on **Sunday, February 15 at 11:30 AM in the Fireside Room** following worship. For more information, contact Finance Chairperson, Jill Shibuya, at jes3134@gmail.com.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

DONATE TO THE DIAPER DRIVE.

Donate to the Valentines Day Diaper Drive benefiting Bay Area Crisis Nursery **February 1st to 14th.**

Collection bins will be located in the narthex and Wesley Center. In 2025, we collected almost 4,000 diapers! Let's double our efforts this year!

ITEMS NEEDED:

- Diapers sizes 4-6
- Pull ups

To learn more about the Bay Area Crisis Network, visit: <https://bayareacrisisnursery.org>.

For more information please contact Claudia Artiga, artigaclaud@aol.com.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL OFFERING: HOPE SOLUTIONS.

Your Special Offering this quarter will go towards supporting Hope Solutions. This well-respected charitable organization helps end homelessness by providing housing and support services to more than 2,000 marginalized families and individuals. Hope Solutions is the “go-to” role-model that cities in Contra Costa County use to help those in need get back on their feet.

Hope Solutions was formerly Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (CCIH). This local organization has been addressing the need for stable housing in Contra Costa County since 1991. It maintains service sites in three Contra Costa locations. Hope Solutions offers supportive housing for individuals and families, mental health services, employment support, and academic enrichment for youth. This organization also collaborates with community partners to advocate for improved care for at-risk residents. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are important values that Hope Solutions strives to live out on a daily basis so that everyone connected with the organization can live their best life.

You can support Hope Solutions’ important work by donating to SRVUMC’s Special Offering fund [here](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/giving/to/special-missions-offering) (<https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/giving/to/special-missions-offering>)

You can also donate to Hope Solutions’ annual fundraiser gala on March 14th.

Grab your tickets [here](https://www.hopesolutions.org/annualgala/) before they’re gone or visit <https://www.hopesolutions.org/annualgala/>.

This photo is from Hope Solutions’ 2025 gala. Donate now and support their work!



ANNOUNCEMENTS

THE MEN'S BREAKFAST RETURNS FEBRUARY 21.

All men (and their guests) are welcome to attend the Methodist Men's Breakfast in Wesley Center.

The date will be **Saturday, February 21, 8-10AM**. Enjoy a great breakfast prepared by members of the group.

The program speaker for our next Men's Family Breakfast will be a representative from White Pony Express who will talk about their organization's mission/vision and ways we can get involved.

There will be a suggested donation of \$10 a person which will be collected at the event.

Click [here](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3399861) to register or visit <https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/registrations/events/3399861>.



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](mailto:pcraw2164@gmail.com) 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

NEW CONCERT SERIES CONTINUES MARCH 7.

Join us on Saturday, March 7 at 6 PM in the Wesley Center for our new **ELEVATED CONNECTION Concert Series**. Come and enjoy an evening of great music, delicious food, and awesome community! Please help spread the word and invite your friends and neighbors to come. All are welcome!”



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SAVE THE DATE FOR WINTER NIGHTS.

By Nancy Garnick

As part of SRVUMC's Winter Nights program, our church will again be hosting several unhoused families this spring, from April 27 - May 11, 2026. We are responsible for the first week and St. Isidore's will take responsibility for the second week on our campus. There are typically anywhere from 10 - 25 guests, who will stay in tents in Wesley Center. Volunteers will be needed to help with jobs such as meal providers, laundry, unloading and loading the trucks with supplies, children's tutoring, child supervision, Bingo night, etc. Monetary donations will be accepted on the church website to help offset costs. More details to follow!

Please contact [Kal Peters](mailto:kaltpeters@gmail.com), kaltpeters@gmail.com or [Nancy Garnick](mailto:nancyogarnick@gmail.com), nancyogarnick@gmail.com if you would like to participate in this worthwhile endeavor or have any questions. (Note that anyone working directly with children needs to complete Safe Sanctuary training and be fingerprinted).

Last year, the Learning, Living, Loving in Faith Together (LIFT) group served meals to unhoused families during Winter Nights.



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

(continued from previous page)

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.

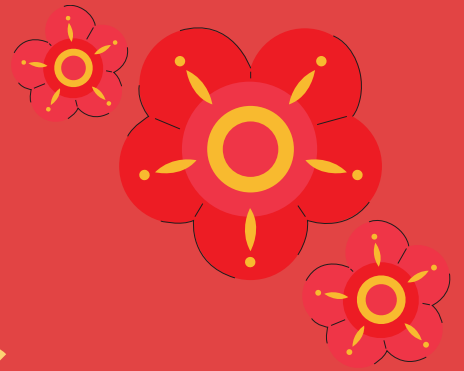
10. Submission Deadlines

- 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
LUNAR

NEW YEAR

FEBRUARY 17



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: JEREMIAH CHAPMAN.

By Sarah Stribling

SRVUMC's newest staff member is Jeremiah Chapman, Director of A/V Services. He has an extensive background working in sound production and impactful nonprofits.

Growing up in Worcester, Massachusetts, Jeremiah has always been tech savvy. He's been using computers since he was eight. His love of sound production began while attending Johnson C. Smith University. Jeremiah became a sports broadcaster for the university. Within three months, Jeremiah became executive producer. This opportunity eventually led to him opening a chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists.

Jeremiah moved to California in 2017 for his role of National Training Director working with a nonprofit organization focused on encouraging youth to get involved with social justice issues. He also has experience in grant writing.

Jeremiah's creative spirit led him to found Afro Vibes and Wine Festival. Inspired by his trip to Jamaica in 2023, this annual festival combines several

of Jeremiah's passions: Music, entrepreneurship, community space, food, and film. In 2024, Afro Vibes and Wine drew 600 people and featured several musical artists.

In his free time, Jeremiah can be found delving into music and film production. He has produced a brief documentary on Afro Vibes and Wine. "Music has a spiritual resonance. It can deliver a positive message that worshippers can appreciate," Jeremiah declares.

**Jeremiah and his wife Nanyelis.
Welcome the Chapman's to SRVUMC!**



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

CARILLON HANDBELL CHOIR SHINES IN THE NEW YEAR.

By Winnie Stribling

Saturday morning, January 17th, found Wesley Center ringing out as our Carillon Choir, accompanied by ringers from St. Timothy Episcopal Church and Community Presbyterian Church, gathered to attend a Handbell Techniques Workshop. Fourteen ringers spent hours honing their skills from how to hold the bell, ring from loud to soft and vice versa, improve bell tone using movements unique to handbell ringing, work on sight reading skills, and other tips to improve our ringing. Martellatos, anyone? How about those damps!

We welcomed David and Lois Kail, former ringers with Sonos Handbell Ensemble, a premier playing group in the Bay Area, to guide us with their talents and expertise. After a light lunch, those that could stay put on gloves, the plastic kind, and rubbed their hands with special polish onto all five octaves, making them shine like new. Thanks to all who participated. We had a great time playing and hanging out together. and are looking forward to doing this again.



BETWEEN THE BOOKENDS.



HAPPY ♥ DAY!

February is a month in which we show our loved ones how much we love and care for them. It is also a month for us to remember our church's motto, "Kindness Matters." The following books exemplify kindness as has been previously mentioned in Between the Bookends.

Paperboy - a boy who stutters is given understanding and guidance for this.

Mother Daughter Murder Night - a grandmother is determined to assist her granddaughter who is being accused of a crime.

Thursday Murder Club - the retired Scotland Yard agent, Elizabeth, cares for her beloved Stephan, who is suffering from dementia. Even Bogdan, the groundskeeper, plays chess with him to keep his brain active.

Still Alice - a very active Harvard professor is experiencing forgetfulness often but does not understand why. Her family is aware of her changing behavior and are told it is Alzheimer's. They simply continue to love and care for her. After all, she is still Alice.

The Ride of Her Life - A middle aged woman wants to leave her useless farm in Maine and head to California with her dog, her horse and a bundle of belongings. The friendly, helpful, caring people she encounters along her bumpy way is astounding.

MISSING BOOKS

The Firm

Small Great Things

Book Woman of Troublesome Creek

The Exchange

The Christmas Tree

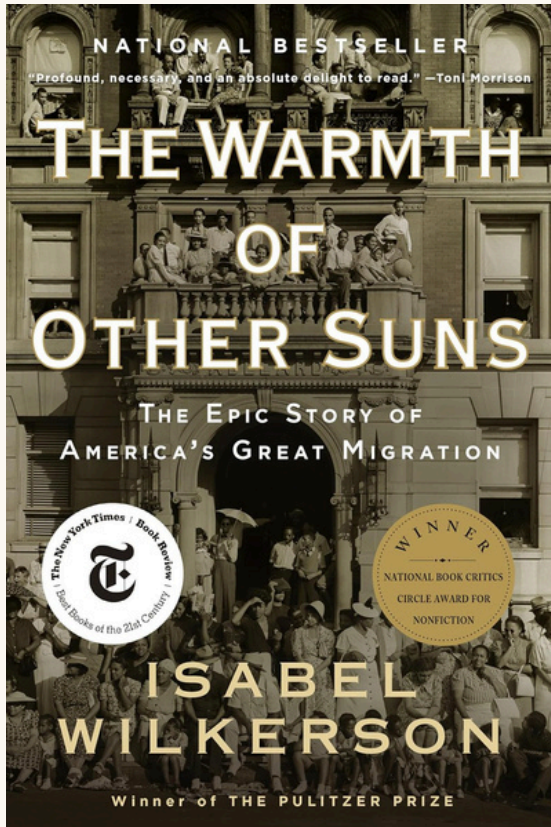
The Christmas Train

Many of these books are **Late**; look for them. Please return books in a timely manner.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP.

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



NEXT BOOK SELECTION: THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS.

On **February 23** we will talk about the book The Warmth of Other Suns by Isabel Wilkerson. The book follows the mass exodus of six million Black Americans from the South to northern and western cities.

Click [here](#) to buy the book or go to <https://www.amazon.com/Warmth-Other-Suns-Americas-Migration/dp/0679763880>.

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

SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Last month, Anita Weir presented about our church's environmentally-friendly green kitchen!



You won't want to miss UMeUS' Mardi Gras celebration! It's the perfect way to indulge before Lent!

POTLUCK & PRESENTATION TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 11:45AM, WESLEY CENTER

Our very own, extremely talented Bill Dastic will share his writing experiences and publishing accomplishments. Bill is a GREAT writer and a great speaker. Please bring a dish to share – or just stop at the store to bring something easy – we always have plenty of food, what we want there is YOU!

LUNCH WITH FRIENDS TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17TH, NOON, WESLEY CENTER

Help us celebrate Mardi Gras/Fat Tuesday and the beginning of Lent. Louisiana Red Beans and Rice, okra salad and Mardi Gras King Cake. All are welcome and encouraged to enjoy this time of open fellowship for all! It's the best \$10 lunch in the Valley (suggested donation).

MARCH SCHEDULE

Mark your calendar for **Potluck and Presentation March 3rd** (speaker to be announced) and **Lunch with Friends on March 17th!** The luck of the Irish be with you!

OUT INTO THE WORLD

THANK YOU, SRVUMC!

Church member and Angel Tree Committee member Beth McClelland shared this inspiring note she received from STAND! for SRVUMC's help making Christmas a bit brighter for survivors of intimate partner violence in Contra Costa County.

Hello, Beth, and Happy New Year!

Thank you to your Angel Tree group and to those in your congregation, who so thoughtfully created the lovely gift baskets and provided gift cards – all to benefit our clients who are working to be free from intimate partner violence. Every year, your group has been instrumental in creating a loving, joyous holiday for those living in the STAND! shelter and transitional housing units. Your actions have truly helped them to feel “at home”, loved, and valued.

There are never enough ways to thank the congregation for all that you do to make this community a better place.

I hold hope that this new year will be on filled with more joy and kindness in our world...your congregation

certainly has brought that here to STAND! Thank you!

I hold hope that this new year will be on filled with more joy and kindness in our world...your congregation certainly has brought that here to STAND! Thank you!

Cindy Goga
Development and Communications
Lead, STAND!



OUT INTO THE WORLD

ELEVATED CONNECTION CONCERT SERIES.

January saw the inaugural Elevated Connection concert! This concert featured the Cornerstone band from Silicon Valley. Living Water was the opener and Jeremiah, our Director of A/V DJed the event. The goal of the concert series is to bring new people into the church while showcasing SRVUMC's community and values.

Special thanks to the Cornerstone band and Living Water for their energetic performance and all the volunteers who made the concert a success!



CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Renée Beck
Stan Nakaso
- 2 Harry Knapp
Ted Nguyen
- 3 Le Anne Jacobi
Linda Jimerson
- 4 Megan Buckley
- 5 Doug Beck
Melanie Hasik
- 7 Debbie Kelly
Katy Mannell
- 8 Ami Rowland
Marilyn Hansen (91)
- 9 Laurie Stocking
- 10 Dave Pierce
- 11 Beverly McAdams
Mary Jean Spediacci (97)
- 12 Rebecca Byrom
Joanne Knapp
Millie Loper (97)
- 13 Eleanor Gross
Lisa Jancarik
Maggie Stienstra
- 14 Chuck Lindquist
- 16 Anne Burk
Carol Sayers
- 19 John Pavel
- 23 Kal Peters
- 24 Elisa Ericson
Christine Ritter
Lindsay Hiratzka
Sherrie Fraser
- 25 Andrea Bourgeois
Joan Pierce
- 26 Isabel D'Elia
Suzanne Stephens Ricker
- 28 Maggie Rossini

ANNIVERSARIES

- 3 Anne & Jim Burk (63)
- 4 Nancy & Cliff Campbell
Candice & Steve Newburn
- 6 Donna & Chuck Lindquist
- 16 Kal & Kevin Peters



AMONG OURSELVES.



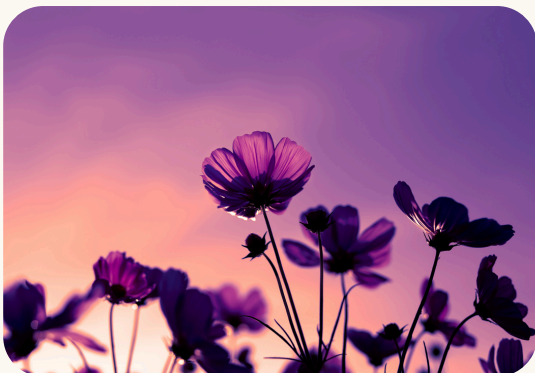
HEALTH CONCERNS

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, Bart Jacobi, Pastor Sam's father-in-law, Pastor Sam's parents, 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 Alice Anthony and her family on the passing of her husband, Alex lantuono.

To the Anderson family on the passing of Jan.

To the Hirsch family on the passing of Jo Ann.

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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