

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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SO THAT WE MAY REMEMBER: GRATITUDE FOR THE SABINS.

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” ~ Philippians 1:3-6

In every generation, the people of God are shaped not only by what we believe, but by what we remember.

Throughout Scripture, we see a consistent pattern: God’s people are called to mark moments of faithfulness so they will not be forgotten. When the Israelites crossed the Jordan River, they set up twelve stones as a memorial, so that future generations would ask, “What do these stones mean?” (Joshua 4:6). Their story would be told again and again—not simply as history, but as testimony. A witness to God’s faithfulness and to the people who trusted Him.

In the same spirit, the Church has always found ways to remember and give thanks for those whose lives have

borne fruit in the life of the community. The Apostle Paul often paused in his letters to name and honor fellow servants—men and women whose quiet, steady faith made the work of the Gospel possible. These remembrances were not about elevating individuals above others, but about telling the truth: that God works through people, and that their faithfulness matters.

It is in this deeply biblical tradition that we prepare for a special moment in **(continued on next page)**



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the life of our church.

This past month, Bill Sabin celebrated his 99th birthday on July 26—a remarkable milestone that invites both gratitude and reflection. Alongside his late wife Nancy, Bill has been a quiet yet extraordinary presence in the story of our church. Their legacy is not only seen in what they gave, but in how they gave—with humility, perseverance, and deep love for this community.

Many of us worship each Sunday in spaces that have been touched, shaped, and renewed through Bill and Nancy's generosity. Our beautiful courtyard, which welcomes us with its peace and shade, stands as a place of gathering and fellowship because of their vision and care. The sanctuary itself—renewed and strengthened, filled with light and thoughtful design—continues to hold our prayers, our songs, and our sacred moments week after week.

And each Sunday, as music fills the sanctuary through the organ so beautifully played by Nadia Koliha, we are quite literally surrounded by their gift. It is a gift that continues to bless not just those present, but generations yet to come.

What makes this legacy even more meaningful is the spirit in which it was offered. The Sabins did not seek recognition. Their generosity was

marked by quiet determination and a willingness to serve, even when the path was not always easy. They gave not only resources, but time, energy, and heart. In many ways, their story reflects Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

And their heart has long been here—woven into the life of this church.

As a congregation, one of our ongoing callings is to practice gratitude—to notice, to name, and to give thanks for the ways God is at work through one another. When we do this, we are not simply looking backward; we are shaping the future. We are teaching the next generation what faithfulness looks like. We are leaving markers—our own "stones of remembrance"—that say: this is who we are, and this is how God has been at work among us.

In that spirit, we will be dedicating two plaques as lasting signs of remembrance. One will be placed in the courtyard, honoring the beauty and welcome that space offers to all who enter. The other will be installed on the organ, a symbol of the music and worship that continue to lift our hearts each week. These markers are not just about the past—they are invitations for future generations to ask, to learn, and to give thanks.

They remind us that the church is built not only **(continued on next page)**

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with bricks and beams, but with lives of faith.

On Sunday, August 16, we will gather in worship for a special time of recognition and thanksgiving for Bill and Nancy Sabin. This will be a moment for us, as a church family, to celebrate a legacy of generosity and to honor the quiet faithfulness that has made such a lasting impact on our shared life.

And just as importantly, it will be a moment to renew our own sense of calling—to give, to serve, and to love in ways that will bless those who come after us.

I hope you will join us for this meaningful and joyful day. Following worship, we will continue the celebration with a special cake and time of fellowship during coffee hour.

Come, give thanks with us. Come, be part of the story God is still writing in and through this community.

Giving Thanks For All The Faithful Saints,
P. Sam | syun@srvumc.org



ANNOUNCEMENTS

COMING SOON: NEW FAITH FORMATION CLASSES.

By Bill Rust, Faith Development Chair

Become a curious seeker! Join us in learning, sharing, good conversation, and being “opened” in these popular faith-growing adult classes.

Pay attention to where you are on the pathway to becoming a disciple, a follower of Jesus. You will find a class that speaks to you right where you are! These class descriptions will help you. Or talk to Pastor Sam about which class is right for you. Then join in! It will nurture your soul.

We want these classes to grow our understanding of the call our church’s guiding vision statement makes on us: **PURSUING A LIFE WITH GOD AND A LIFE WITH EACH OTHER BY FOLLOWING JESUS, THRIVING IN COMMUNITY, AND HEALING THE WORLD.** What does that look like in practice? Come find out. You’re invited!

Our congregation’s **CORE VALUES** are at home in every class and group study we offer: **“INCLUSION:** We welcome seekers and doubters, friends and strangers, those with labels and those without.
INSPIRATION: We invite the Spirit of

God to touch our hearts and transform our lives.

IMPACT: We reach out to make a measurable difference wherever and whenever we can.”

Classes for 2026-27

These classes are a great way to experience **community** and **connection**. They are for busy people! Several are short (6 or fewer sessions), making participation easier. Longer classes may be “drop-in” or for a set group. You can mix and match them for what works for you and fits your schedule.

Sunday mornings after worship.

Taking the Sermon into the World.

Drop-in, 11:45 AM-12:30 PM, meets weekly, ongoing. Coordinator: Bill Rust. Come join in an inquiring conversation on the morning worship sermon message on how each of us can live out the message in the community. Discussion leaders: Bill Rust, Julie Klug and others.

Monday evenings, “The Spiritual Brain” book study. Dave Coombs, our acclaimed teacher, will lead. Twenty-four weekly (**continued on next page**)

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sessions (with some breaks), Sept. 14–Mar. 22, 7:00–8:00 PM, by Zoom. Each session includes introductory remarks by Dave followed by group discussion facilitated by Dave.

Tuesday mornings, Disciple Fast Track Bible Study (“Disciple I”).

September 15–March 23; weekly, 10:30 AM to noon. For beginners; engaging directly with Scripture. Co-leaders: Pastor Sam, Doug Beck and Renee Beck. Twenty-four weekly sessions, with breaks at Thanksgiving (1 week), Christmas (2 weeks) and, as applicable, Easter (1 week).

Wednesdays, after work, Disciple Fast Track Bible Study (“Disciple I”).

September 16–March 24, weekly, 5:00–6:30 PM (or TBD by the group). For beginners; engaging directly with Scripture. Co-leaders: Julie Klug and Bill Rust. Twenty-four weekly sessions, with breaks at Thanksgiving (1 week), Christmas (2 weeks) and, as applicable, Easter (1 week). with Pastor Sam.

Friday mornings, **Friday Morning Coffee Group**, a weekly off-campus,

drop-in faith-sharing community. Meets each Friday, 9:30 A.M., at Bagel Street Café in the Danville Livery Shopping Center.

October, **UMC 101 Class**: An exploration of United Methodist theology; the “polity”/structure through which The United Methodist Church does ministry; the role of San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church (SRVUMC) in the larger Methodist ministries, and how we (SRVUMC, the congregation, and individual members) can join in these ministries. See, e.g. www.umc.org; www.umcjustice.org; and www.umcmision.org. This class will be a follow-up to a sermon series in September. Watch for an announcement of time and place and class details.

Weeks of December: Advent Book Study. Advent Sundays November 29–December 20. This congregation-wide **Advent Book Study** is coordinated with Pastor Sam’s Sunday sermon messages. We encourage all groups and classes to join in the study and hear Pastor Sam preach on **(continued on next page)**

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(continued from previous page) the weekly topic in his Sunday sermon message.

Weeks of February 10 (Ash Wednesday) – March 21 (Palm Sunday): Lent Book Study. This congregation-wide **Lent Book Study** is coordinated with Pastor Sam's Sunday sermon messages. We encourage all groups and classes to join in the study and hear Pastor Sam preach on the weekly topic in his Sunday sermon message.

Winter/Spring: New Study Class: Living Out the SRVUMC Vision Statement. A refresh study series on living out the SRVUMC Vision Statement and practicing our Core Values in our everyday living. The time, place and class details will be announced.

In addition to these classes and studies, many of our ongoing groups also present complementary book and video studies and other faith growing experiences. Pay attention to their announcements in "The Valley Messenger" newsletter and in the Friday Memo.

Be curious. Open your heart and mind through Bible study and deepening your faith. For more information, contact **Pastor Sam, syun@srvumc.org**.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

JOIN US FOR “DISCIPLE FAST TRACK” BIBLE STUDY.

By Bill Rust, Faith Development Chair

DISCIPLE FAST TRACK is a foundational, disciplined, 24-session small group Bible study designed to connect us to Scripture. Scripture draws each of us to explore who we are, our relationship with the Holy, and our relationships with each other and the world. Scripture has something to say directly to you. Are you listening? The weekly study lessons guide you into Scripture, but they do not tell you what you should take from Scripture. That’s your job! You “live” in Scripture and “listen” for how it speaks directly to you.

DISCIPLE FAST TRACK is a part of the acclaimed United Methodist-created **DISCIPLE** family of Bible studies that is active throughout The United Methodist Church and 33 other denominations. It is for beginners and those seeking to be refreshed through Bible study.

Please join us. We have two new **DISCIPLE** study groups now in formation. The first will meet weekly on Tuesday mornings, 10:30-12:00 PM, from September 15 through March 23 (with breaks at Thanksgiving, Christmas and, if

applicable, Easter). Pastor Sam and Doug and Renee Beck will co-lead this Tuesday morning group. The second group will meet weekly on Wednesday afternoons after work, about 5:00-6:30 PM (time to be set by the group) from September 16 through March 24, with holiday breaks. Julie Klug and Bill Rust will co-lead the Wednesday group.

We will read a large portion of the Bible. The program asks for weekly preparation and attendance.

DISCIPLE meetings quickly become a natural part of the rhythm of your week: Scripture is telling your story, and you want to know more. Your bonds with the group grow. You just want to be there! Contact Pastor Sam at syun@srvumc.org to join either group or if you have questions.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

GRILL AND CHILL THIS AUGUST.

Join us for Grill and Chill this August! We have long enjoyed this fun summer tradition. It's the perfect chance to 'chill out' and socialize, get well nourished, and of course be entertained.

We gather every other Thursday for a themed BBQ and musical entertainment. The next events will be August 13 and August 27 at 6PM.

Keep an eye out in other church communications for detailed info, including how to sign up.

For more information, please contact [Rob Rees at robrees145@gmail.com](mailto:robrees145@gmail.com) or [Chris Roesgen at clroesgen@gmail.com](mailto:clroesgen@gmail.com).



ANNOUNCEMENTS

ELEVATED CONNECTION RETURNS AUGUST 29.



- **Live Music:** Inspirational performances by Ransomed Souls
- **Great Food:** Food will be available for purchase before the show
- **Authentic Community:** Experience an inclusive community that welcomes you just as you are.

On **Saturday, August 29**, Elevated Connection will host a special performance by the talented **Ransomed Souls**.

Be sure to arrive early so you can grab a bite to eat before the show. Doors open at 6 PM.

Who: All ages are welcome

When: August 29 | 6:00 PM

Where: Wesley Center, 902 Danville Blvd., Alamo

Cost: Free!

Keep an eye out in other church communications for a link to register!

Help keep the music going! Your generous donation allows us to keep these inspiring Elevated Connection concerts free of charge and accessible to all. [DONATE HERE!](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

REGISTER FOR RISE AGAINST HUNGER.

Rise Against Hunger, an international humanitarian organization, is growing a global movement to end hunger by empowering communities, nourishing lives and responding to emergencies. With locations across the U.S. and five international offices, the organization provides immediate nourishment for those facing hunger today and implements sustainable solutions that will lift entire communities for years to come. Rise Against Hunger has facilitated volunteer meal packaging of more than 540 million meals to be distributed to countries around the world.

SRVUMC will be hosting a Rise Against Hunger meal packing event on **September 13 from 11:30AM to 1:30PM.**

Scan the QR code to register for the event!



Our goal this year is to raise \$8,000 to ship thousands of meals where they can make the most impact.

Many volunteers and donations will be needed to make this event a success! A suggested minimum donation of \$20 (or more if you are able) per volunteer is appreciated.. We'd like to have at least 100 volunteers participate in this fun event.

Click [here](#) to donate.

Click [here](#) to register for the event.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL MISSIONS OFFERING: RISE AGAINST HUNGER.

Your Special Mission Offering this quarter will go towards supporting Rise Against Hunger. This international humanitarian organization is growing a global movement to end hunger by empowering communities, nourishing lives and responding to emergencies.

You can support Rise Against Hunger's important work by donating to SRVUMC's Special Mission Offering fund [here](https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/giving/to/special-missions-offering) (<https://srvumc.churchcenter.com/giving/to/special-missions-offering>) Learn more about Rise Against Hunger [here](https://riseagainsthunger.org) or visit <https://riseagainsthunger.org>.

LADIES! SAVE THE DATE FOR THE WOMEN'S RETREAT.

Friday, January 29 - Sunday January 31
at Villa Maria Del Mar in Santa Cruz on the ocean

"The Joy of Living with Courage"
led by Pastor Kim Risedorph

When we know we are being authentic, when we feel comfortable being ourselves, we feel fully alive. No matter our age or experiences, being our truest selves takes practice, awareness and courage. And, being our true selves is not just about us as individuals. There's more at stake. Being authentic and courageous is how we help heal the world around us. Nothing delights God more than when we are living as God's beloved. Join us for a joyful exploration of God's love for us, here and now.



"Retreats offer us a time to pause, reflect, connect with others. Community, a beautiful setting and a meaningful exploration of authentic faith----that's a great combination. That's what the Women's Retreat offers. I look forward to this time with you." Pastor Kim

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BALANCE AND MOBILITY CLASS MEETS WEEKLY.

Balance and Mobility class for adults over 55 meets Thursdays from 12-12:45 PM in the Fireside Room.

Move with strength. Age with confidence.

Falls are one of the top reasons older adults land in the emergency department. As a former ER nurse, instructor Teri DeLaMontanya has seen firsthand how often loss of muscle, mobility, and balance are to blame—and how much of it is preventable.

After age 30, we lose up to 5% of muscle mass each decade. That decline affects strength, reaction time, and stability. But it doesn't have to. With focused movement and strength training, you can rebuild muscle, improve coordination, and protect your independence at any age.

This class is designed for adults 55+ and led by Teri—a Registered Nurse, Ironman triathlete, and lifestyle coach with deep medical knowledge and personal experience. Whether you're recovering, maintaining, or building

strength for the future, Teri will meet you where you are.

Join us at San Ramon Valley Methodist Church—a welcoming space where you'll train your body to stay upright, energized, and in motion.

It's never too late to start.

This is a donation based class and is open to the public. Suggested donation is \$15 payable to PEACE (Providing Easier Access to Care Everywhere).

Click [here](https://www.behavioralfitnesstoday.com/schedule/be-fit-classes-and-groups/) to sign up or visit <https://www.behavioralfitnesstoday.com/schedule/be-fit-classes-and-groups/>.

Contact [Rob Rudow](#), at robert_d_rudow@yahoo.com for more information.



SPIRITUAL GROWTH

IN THE PEW: ANITA WEIR-BALL.

By Sarah Stribling

Longtime SRVUMC church member Anita Weir-Ball knows how to make an impact. Growing up on a small working farm in northeast Colorado, Anita grew milking cows and canning vegetables. Nearly dying of pneumonia as a young child sparked her interest in becoming a nurse. She went on to earn a master's degree in nursing and establish a career in public health. "I wanted to make an impact every day," Anita acknowledges.

Faith has been foundational in Anita's life. Her childhood Methodist church in Akron, CO strongly emphasized making a difference. Picking up where many social services in her small town left off, Anita visited the homebound and the elderly in nursing homes. She also attended Sunday School and Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF).

In 1982, Anita's family, which had grown to include her husband Jim and two twin daughters, moved from Pinole to Danville. They also joined SRVUMC at that time because they wanted to give their children a strong sense of faith and community to help them weather their adolescence.

Their children participated in MYF. Anita also chaperoned a Sierra Service Project outreach trip to a northern California Native American reservation. "It was exhausting and the kids were awesome," Anita recalls.

Anita continues to impact the life of SRVUMC. She has managed SRVUMC's community kitchen for the past eight years. "Managing the kitchen is a joy," Anita asserts. The kitchen meets certification requirements that allows food to be served to members of SRVUMC and the public as well. "Just having this option is such a blessing...[it] allows us to serve groups with dishes which saves the cost of paper supplies and environmental waste," Anita states.



BETWEEN THE BOOKENDS.



August is our last full month of summer. There is still plenty of time to relax wherever you choose with a good book in hand. There are many on the cart from summer sports to books of our country and a few on aviation. July 14th was the birthdate of Amelia Earhart, a woman who paved the way for women pilots.

Please look for these late or missing books. Thank you!

- [Women of the Bible Speak](#)
- [Lessons in Chemistry](#)
- [West With Giraffes](#)
- [Solito](#)
- [Ordinary Grace](#)

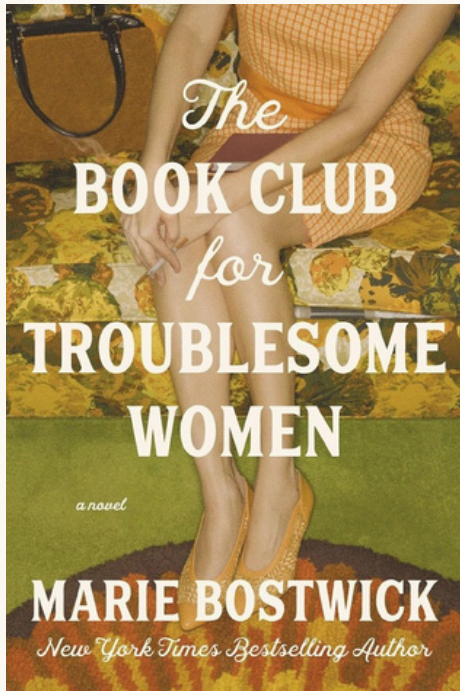
In Charles Finch's novel [An Extravagant Death](#), he has his gentleman sleuth, Charles Lenox heading to America. No longer is he considered an amateur detective since he uncovered some detectives in Scotland Yard. He had been investigating crimes of thievery and discovered that the thief was a police constable. However, the thief revealed to Lenox that he was acting under the orders of a superior officer. That is what led Lenox to Scotland Yard. He is now considered a prominent and highly respected detective in England. The Prime Minister Disraeli has offered Lenox the opportunity to go to America and meet with police in major cities. The purpose is to establish international investigative operations in exchange for the latest crime solving methods.

Charles would travel with full authority of Parliament. To accept the offer was posing a difficult decision for Lenox since he and Lady Jane had just had their second child, Clara. Also, he was considering his busy agency although he knew Polly and Dallington could manage. It was Lady Jane who convinced him that he would regret not accepting such an honorable offer. It is when he is leaving New York and heading to Boston that his train is stopped and he is informed of the death of a most beautiful debutante. When asked to investigate, he quickly refuses by stating that he is there representing England not as a detective. He was given more details by the messenger. She was found on the beach of someone's property. Why was she there? Had she fallen or was she pushed? Lenox finally agrees to go to Newport Beach requesting that no one disturb the crime area. Readers, don your sleuth hats and begin thinking like Lenox.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

AFTERNOON BOOK GROUP.

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



NEXT BOOK SELECTION: BOOK CLUB FOR TROUBLESOME WOMEN

Our **August 24** choice is Book Club for Troublesome Women by Marie Bostwick. These women have great lives in the swanky suburbs of Virginia. The 1960's are in the spotlight for this book about friendship.

Click [here](https://www.amazon.com/Book-Club-Troublesome-Women/dp/1400344743) to buy the book or go to <https://www.amazon.com/Book-Club-Troublesome-Women/dp/1400344743>.

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



SPIRITUAL GROWTH



Last month, the UMeUs group went to the ballpark to cheer on the San Fransisco Giants as they took on the Toronto Blue Jays! Go Giants!



We can't wait to feast on Greg Lane's award-winning BBQ later this month! Let's celebrate summer together in community.

SEPTEMBER SCHEDULE

See you in September for **Potluck and Presentation September 1st, Lunch with Friends on September 15th, and "Bingo and Buffet" on September 29th (5th Tuesday of the month).**

POTLUCK & PRESENTATION TUESDAY, AUGUST 4TH, 11:45AM, WESLEY CENTER

Our very own Julie Klug will be presenting her published prayerfully, thought filled book Hope - 30 Days of Devotion. Who knew we had such a gem amongst us? Thank you, Julie! Please bring a dish to share, or stop at the grocery store on your way over. We always have plenty of food - it's your company we want!

LUNCH WITH FRIENDS TUESDAY, AUGUST 18TH, NOON, WESLEY CENTER

END OF SUMMER BBQ!!

Guest chef Greg Lane will be BBQing his Award Winning St. Louis Ribs (REALLY, Award Winning!!), crunchy corn bread, watermelon, fun summer salad and smoked peach cobbler for dessert - Yum!! Please join us to celebrate the end of summer. We will be in the Courtyard (weather permitting).

OUT INTO THE WORLD

SRVUMC SMASHES GOAL OF DONATING OVER 100 BACKPACKS.

By Claudia Artiga

SRVUMC Family:

Talk about moving mountains! The SRVUMC family didn't just meet our goal of 100 children's backpacks for the **Monument Crisis Center** - we completely blew it out of the water!

A massive shout out to our incredible delivery team, who hit the road today to drop off a whopping 126 backpacks! They aren't done yet, either—they'll be dropping off the final late arrivals later this week, bringing our grand total to **166 backpacks!**

Because of your generosity, 166 of our little siblings are heading to school better equipped, confident, and ready to conquer the school year. **You did it again, SRVUMC!**

Final Score: Target: 100 | Reality: 166!



OUT INTO THE WORLD

CAMP KILIMANJARO: A WEEK OF WISDOM AND WONDER AT VBS.

By P. Sam aka “Safari Sam”

This July, San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church was transformed into an unforgettable adventure as children embarked on Camp Kilimanjaro, a five-morning Vacation Bible School journey through the book of Proverbs. Set against the backdrop of the tallest free-standing mountain in the world, our young campers explored what it means to live wisely, guided by Scripture, community, and a whole lot of fun.

Each day, children gathered for an energetic opening assembly led by the ever-enthusiastic Safari Sam, Mr. Jungle Jeff, and Hanna the Hedgehog. With a cheerful “Jambo!”—Swahili for “hello”—ringing out each morning, the spirit of welcome and excitement set the tone for the day’s adventure.

Throughout the week, our campers were accompanied by a lively cast of animal guides: Tembo the Elephant, Twiga the Giraffe, Kiboko the Hippo, Tumbuli the Monkey, and Duma the Cheetah. Together, they helped bring biblical wisdom to life in ways that were engaging and memorable. The children learned to listen carefully with their ears, trust God with all their

heart, use their words to build others up, work diligently with their hands, and walk in the company of the wise. These timeless teachings from Proverbs were woven into every activity, from storytelling to hands-on learning.

Camp Kilimanjaro was filled with dynamic rotations including games, science experiments, crafts, music, and snacks—each one reinforcing the day’s message in creative and meaningful ways. Laughter, curiosity, and joy **(continued on next page)**





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In addition to learning about God’s wisdom, our campers also turned their hearts outward. They learned about children in Kenya who face daily hunger, and how God calls us to respond with compassion and action. This connection will continue beyond VBS, as we invite all participating families to join us for our Rise Against Hunger event on September 13. This year, our goal is to pack 20,000 meals to send to Kenya—a tangible way to extend the love and care our children began to understand during the week.

None of this would have been possible without our incredible team of volunteers. From planning and decorating to registrations to leading stations and caring for each child, their dedication and energy made Camp Kilimanjaro a truly smooth and successful experience. We are deeply grateful for each person who gave their time and heart to make this week so special. (Lesson Leaders: Winnie Stribling and Lindsay Hiratzka; Science & Craft Leaders: Larry Henderson and Liz George; Game Leaders: Debbie Byers and Jeff Howe; Snack Leaders: HollyAnn Melton and Ann Radick; Group Guides: Margo Cefelo, Bill Rust, Wendy Cooper, Peggy Hiratzka; Junior Counselors: Maggie Rossini, Alicia Rossini, Evelyn Rossini, Victoria Sagar, Ryan Henderson, Kiana Casiano; Registration and Support Team: Patsy Kyles, Sara Rossini, Claudia Artiga, Angela Lee, Jeremiah Chapman, Sarah Stribling; and special shout out to Bill VanBezey and the Big Boys for the incredible set design!)

It was a full and joyful week—and I’m sure for all of the VBS volunteers that some of the songs are still on repeat in our heads! Our prayer is that the wisdom planted in the hearts of our children will continue to grow, guiding them in the days and years ahead.

BY GIVING ME A PUPPET, SHE HELPED ME FIND MY VOICE.

By Maggie Rossini

Originally published by the Contra Costa Pulse

It was the first day of Vacation Bible School, or VBS, at my church, the summer before seventh grade. I arrived with my mom and younger sisters in tow, clutching a script nervously in my hand.

I had volunteered at VBS the previous summer, when I outgrew the camp as a sixth grader, but this year was different. I was selected by Laura, the children's director, to help lead the camp as the puppeteer. Every morning, I would act out a skit to introduce the main theme of the day, alongside Laura. Each year, VBS had a different theme that went along with the lessons and topics for each day, and this year's theme was Food Truck Party. Laura would play the Head Chef, and I would be DJ Cupcake.

After my volunteer wristband was secured on my wrist and the sound tech gave me a microphone, I beelined over to the cardboard food truck — decorated the week before by my sisters and me — that I would hide in to voice the puppet. After 15 minutes of nervously looking over my script, Laura bent down in front of me to tell

me that kids were coming and asked if I was ready to go. I simply nodded, too queasy to respond. Laura could tell that I was nervous, so she gave me a quick pep-talk of “you can do this” and “nothing happens if you mess up.”

My whole life, I had been very timid and introverted, always keeping to myself. I had one close friend in elementary school — meeting or talking to new people was never my strength. Laura's voice boomed through the room to welcome the children, **(continued on next page)**





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which then signaled my cue to speak.

“Hey, Chef Laura!” I heard my voice through the microphone, much louder and stronger than I anticipated. “Let’s get this food truck party started!” And just like that, our characters spoke back and forth for the next 15 minutes, sang and danced to a few songs, and sent the kids to their first activities.

It really wasn’t as scary as I thought it would be. No one laughed when I stumbled over words or made fun of the way I talked. As the week went on, I found myself becoming more and more excited to put that puppet on my hand and hear my voice through the microphone. I didn’t know it then, but that week would spark my confidence to grow, allowing me to become more and more comfortable with public speaking, and speaking to other people, in general.

Laura pushed me to my social limits by encouraging me to step out of my

comfort zone and speak in front of an audience, even if many of them were as young as 3. It was something I had never done before, and as someone who was very shy, this was a very big deal to me. That one week gave me a confidence in my voice that I had never had before.

Throughout my childhood, Laura has always been pushing me forward and believing in me and my abilities, even when I didn’t.

My 11-year-old self could never imagine me just a year later getting up in front of a bunch of strangers to read a script — it seemed impossible! Something that a shy, awkward girl like me would never do. But Laura knew I had what it took to don that puppet and read a script about food trucks and scripture in front of some elementary schoolers.

Now, Laura is retired but I still act as the puppeteer for VBS every summer.
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OUT INTO THE WORLD

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I'm still quiet, but when I speak, I speak with the confidence and self-assurance that I gained from Laura's belief in me, even when I didn't believe in myself.

This article originally appeared in the Contra Costa Pulse.

Read the original article [here](https://ccpulse.org/2026/07/15/by-giving-me-a-puppet-she-helped-me-find-my-voice/) or visit <https://ccpulse.org/2026/07/15/by-giving-me-a-puppet-she-helped-me-find-my-voice/>.



OUT INTO THE WORLD

KIDS REACH NEW HEIGHTS AT CAMP KILIMANJARO.

Last month's Vacation Bible School saw kids trek through the Book of Proverbs as part of Camp Kilimanjaro. Each day, kids sang, danced, played games, made art, and grew a bit closer to God as they learned to apply wise sayings in the Book of Proverbs to daily life.

Special thanks to the many volunteers and staff who planned, taught, cooked, and cleaned made this year's Vacation Bible School so successful and fun.



OUT INTO THE WORLD

CELEBRATING AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY.

SRVUMC made an impact this past month with a special float in Danville's famous 4th of July parade! The float's theme was "We Are More Than Church on Sundays!" A beautiful banner listed many of the church's groups and activities, including Bible study, pickleball, Grill and Chill, and more. We also had a truck decorated with signs and balloons celebrating America's 250th birthday.

A huge thank you to everyone who planned, decorated, and participated in our float. You helped make God's love visible.



OUT INTO THE WORLD

SUMMER FUN AT THE SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS GAME.

The UMeUs (You, Me, Us) group visited the ballpark last month to see the San Francisco Giants take on the Toronto Blue Jays. It was a memorable time of gathering and thriving in community.

Thank you to everyone who came out to root for the Giants! It was inspiring to experience community together.



OUT INTO THE WORLD

GRILL AND CHILL RETURNS WITH COUNTRY WESTERN FLAIR.

The eagerly anticipated summer tradition of Grill and Chill returned last month. The first Grill and Chill kicked off with a country western theme, complete with BBQ ribs. Many participants got into the spirit, wearing cowboy hats and boots. As if the great food wasn't enough, attendees were treated to country western songs by our own Director of Music and Worship, Jeff Howe and Dewey Reikofski.

Special thanks to all who planned, decorated, cooked, and cleaned for this event.



CELEBRATIONS

BIRTHDAYS

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 Chuck Clark
Marti Sketchley | 16 Andy Mathis
Jenny Swanson |
| 2 Susie McKnight
Evelyn Rossini | 17 Dominic Albertoni
Sun Hee Kim |
| 3 Kim Maddux-Perry
Tammy Webb | 19 Marilyn Milam
Marla Schleicher |
| 6 Michael Dandridge
Emma Sandoval | 21 Kim Bridges
Bill Gsand |
| 7 Ellen Segal | 23 Chris Kelly |
| 8 Max Kennedy
Jerry Osborn | 24 Alyssa Guan |
| 10 Jim Bunker
Carol Warnock | 26 Melinda Love
Anna Ten Elshof |
| 11 Brian Beck
Gary Swanson
Sarah Warnock | 27 Carole Lynne Keller
Marilyn Mathis |
| 12 Julie Klug | 29 Tom Roy |
| 14 Bette Smith | 31 Sheila McClelland (99) |

ANNIVERSARIES

- | |
|--|
| 3 Gloria Holleman & Gary Osterhout
Mary & Bill Nelson (69)
Beth & Jack Robertson |
| 7 Alexis & Niles Bybel |
| 17 Sharon & Dennis Greene (58)
Nancy & Al Tiedemann |
| 20 Barbara & Don Carlson |
| 21 Maggie & John Stienstra (50) |
| 24 Carol & Jim Warnock |
| 25 Al & Nancy Banisch |
| 27 Julie & Bill Dastic (66) |
| 29 Millie & Terry Sherman (62) |
| 30 Carole & Don Johnson (68) |



AMONG OURSELVES.



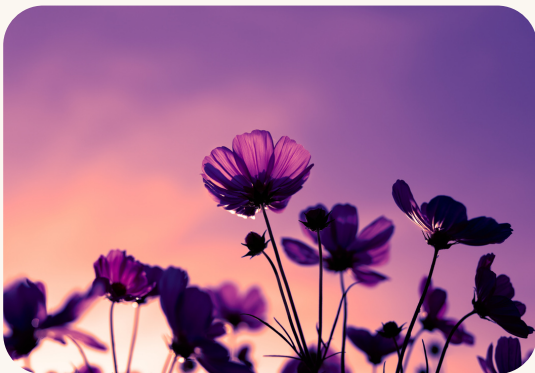
HEALTH CONCERNS

Kay Jones, Jeff Lang, Melanie and Boyd Hasik, Lonnie Bristow, Carol Fhlug, Julie Klug's nephew Taylor, Gerry Carothers' son Brent, Chris Hoff, ClaudeC Johannesen, Bart Jacobi, Pastor Sam's parents, Bill Sabin, Jim Bunker, Mike Henderson, Leigh Meyering, Jess Erickson, and Flo Spanier.



CONTINUED PRAYERS FOR

All those who live with long-term illness, Wendy Chu and her family, those recovering from unemployment, life decisions, homelessness, and sickness in their families, peace in the world, and peace in our country.



OUR SYMPATHY

To Terry Bailey and her family on the passing of her brother-in-law.

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, Director of Operations: lroy@srvumc.org (925) 837-5243 x106

Tania Moore-Bolstad, Youth Ministry Coordinator: tmoores@srvumc.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

Jeremiah Chapman, Director of A/V: jchapman@srvumc.org

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

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

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

Odis Johnson, Facilities Technician: odjohnson@srvumc.org

Alex Maddux, Communications Assistant: amaddux@srvumc.org

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



SAN RAMON VALLEY
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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)

