The

Valley Messenger

A publication of San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church. Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

Season of Change in 2023

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven...

-Ecclesiastes 3: 1 (NRSV)

Happy New Year!

Every January when we ring in a new year, I'm not always sure what to make of it. Oftentimes, it means that another year went by even quicker than the last. Or, come the end of August, I'll be getting another year older. Or, in the case of our church, a pastoral change in July when Pastor Kim retires. Despite not knowing what to make of it, I like to look toward the new year with hope, as it is a new opportunity, a blank canvas, and a chance to start fresh. Every new year ushers in a new season of life for many of us. As the writer of Ecclesiastes talks about, there is a season for everything.

In this coming year, I want to share with you that I, too, am about to enter a new season of ministry. Effective July 1, 2023, I will be taking a personal leave of absence and not returning to SRVUMC as associate/youth pastor. This is not a decision I made lightly, as it took a good deal of prayer and discernment. I feel my calling shifting away from the local church for the time being.

I'm feeling drawn to explore the idea of micro-church and spaces that are not the typical brick -and-mortar church. My ultimate goal is to become bi-vocational, which gets me into the greater community and a valuable ministry in itself. Nevertheless, we still have some vital ministry to continue together between now and July. In the meantime, I will remain committed to serving here and being present for you, even though I am sad to be leaving as well. In a recent article from NPR, many spiritual leaders in this new season are finding ways to

In a <u>recent article from NPR</u>, many spiritual leaders in this new season are finding ways to adapt to the rapidly shifting spiritual culture and finding unique and creative ways to be in

January 2023

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Next Issue: February 2023

Have something you'd like included in next month's Messenger? Please submit your articles to Lisa Jancarik at media@srvumc.org by January 15, 2023.



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ministry with people in different settings than a church building. I find the idea of church without walls—gathering around a campfire or table at a coffeehouse or café for a discussion around a spiritual topic, and then doing community service—intriguing. Similarly, a colleague in Colorado started a church in 2009 that meets in different bars around Denver, spending time in discussion and making sack lunches which are then distributed to Denver's unhoused community along with Holy Communion. I am realizing that church can happen in many places, as I believe there is still a yearning for spiritual connection and connection in general.

Our online campus is one of the ways of creating new spaces and I hope we will continue finding ways to reach out and build relationships with people, both online and in-person.

As 2023 unfolds, let us find renewal, be in prayer for our church, and embrace this new season and new year with hope, awe, and wonder.

Peace and blessings,

Pastor Andrew





Top: Pastor Andrew; Bottom: Trevor and Andrew in their introductory photo last year.

January Sermon Series: A Meaningful Faith in a Modern World

We have celebrated the birth of Jesus and now we explore how the Christ Presence among us will continue to transform the world

January 1: We celebrate Epiphany as Pastor Andrew leads us in worship

January 8: Meaningful Faith in a Modern World: What About All Those Healings in the Bible?

January 15: Meaningful Faith in a Modern World: More Than Good Thoughts and Prayers

January 22: Guest Preacher Pastor Dan Sturdivant

January 29: TBD



Stewardship 2022 Update

As one wise poet, Rabindranath Tagore, put it, "The one who plants trees knowing that [he/she/they] will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life."

Your giving to this faith community is planting seeds for a future for all who come after us. Thank you for all the ways you give and for all the ways you make a difference in our community.

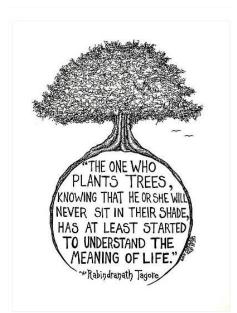
Stewardship pledges as of December 10:

110 pledge cards

\$624,765 Pledges

\$64,069 in Prepaid pledges

We are two thirds of the way towards having what we need to budget our current ministries, staffing and care for our campus. Have we heard from you? Now's the time! *Visit the Give page on website or call the church office for pledge card*, 925/837-5243.



Help Us Celebrate Being a Reconciling Church! Sunday, February 12

In February, we'll celebrate our three and half years of being a reconciling church, and we want to hear from you.

- Are you a new member who joined because we are reconciling? Tell us why it mattered.
- If you have waited and waited for this to happen, please let us know why being a reconciling church is important to you.

We'll collect all the comments we receive and include them in worship. We're especially looking for people to come forward and share their brief comments—it's so much more powerful coming from you. (We could also prerecord your reflections if that works best for you.) Please send your reflections to Pastor Kim at krisedorph@srvumc.org. Thank you for being a part of this celebration!



Learn Your Way Around the AV Loft!

SRVUMC's audio and visual group ("AV Group") is looking for volunteers to take on a role in conducting both in-person and livestreamed services each week. You don't need any previous experience, but bring a willingness to learn and a calling to be a "behind-the-scenes" part of the Sunday service. All training is included.

Take your turn filling one or more of the three primary roles the AV group performs each week. You don't have to rotate through each of the roles. If one role seems more interesting or doable, then we'll train you for those tasks.

- **Slide Presenter.** If you know how to do slide presentations in either PowerPoint or ProPresenter you'd fit right-in here. The role includes advancing a slideshow created by other members of the group to deliver the screen visuals that both the in-person and online worshippers share. For example, the slide presenter makes sure worshipers can follow the lyrics to a hymn with a mouse click timed to the music.
- **Producer.** This volunteer and the slide presenter (above) work together, side-by-side, coordinating the slide presentation with remote-controlled camera views using a "television studio" controller. The controller consists of a joystick and some buttons you would be trained to use. Together, they create a seamless view of what is happening inside the Sanctuary for those watching online.
- Audio Technician. The audio technician controls the audio systems for both in-person and online services to make each sound just right. This role also involves learning how to set up microphones for different scenarios, control performer voice and instrument levels, and control the recording stream levels for online worshipers. Note that this role requires some extra mobility, as one commonly runs—literally—between the balcony and the stage.

Volunteers rotate every few Sundays on a predictable schedule. Arrive by 9 a.m. and be free to go about the rest of your day by 11 a.m. or so.

Contact Sam Hawk at shawk@srvumc.org or Jeff Lang at jlang@ryantech.com with questions or to express interest in training.



Social Media and Online Ministries Director Report Submitted by Sarah Stribling, November 2022

With God's help, work continues to build a second Online Church Campus to extend the reach of this church and transform the world. Sarah and her coach have mapped out a plan for the year that will keep goals on track. Sarah meets with her coach once a month in order to brainstorm ideas for online opportunities. Because the concept of an online church campus is so new, Sarah continues to experiment with offering various online activities to find out which activities people enjoy. Some of these opportunities have included watching recent movie releases via Zoom (four attended), a sermon discussion series (two attended), a mini workshop to discuss individuals' faith journey (nine attended), and interactive Facebook posts that ask participants a Bible trivia question, or their preference given a choice between two options. These interactive posts were hit or miss; posts that asked people quasi-religious icebreaker-like questions such as "What brings you joy?" or "What comes to mind when you hear the word 'grace'?" garnered twelve and six engagements, respectively. Other (mostly secular -themed) questions received no engagement at all, despite showing up in ~80 people's social media feed.

There has been a decline in Facebook participation since November 2021. Although our reach has increased 162% since November 16, 2021, there has been a decrease of 26% in visits to our Facebook page and 32% drop in Facebook page likes. More people are seeing our content, but fewer people are visiting our page and clicking the Like button. One reason for this phenomenon is an increase in users sharing our content with their Facebook friends. There may be several reasons for the decline in overall Facebook participation: Rising interest rates have slowed the economy which has meant a decline in digital advertising revenue. Users are looking elsewhere for their social media; Facebook now faces strong competition from other social media sites such as TikTok. Changes in Ap-

ple's privacy policy has also dented Facebook's profits. Facebook has recently renamed itself Meta and has begun prioritizing its vision of the virtual reality metaverse over social networking.

Seeing this decline in Facebook participation, Jeff Lang, Sam Hawk, and Sarah have transitioned livestreaming via Facebook Live to Church Online Platform, a free streaming platform geared specially for churches. Church Online Platform's bar of participation is lower than Facebook; one does not need an account in order to participate in online chat. For the two weeks that we have livestreamed with Church Online Platform so far, we have had 41 and 46 participants, re-



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spectively. Worship services are archived on our YouTube channel which currently has 112 subscribers, a gain of 33 subscribers since last November.

The Online Church Campus Think Tank, consisting of Alex Maddux, Devon Drake, Trevor Neeley, (occasionally Laura Roy) and Sarah has been reconstituted after a summer break. Work has focused on gearing online content (especially the website) towards our with young children and youth. We are also working on a style guide that will provide consistency in church communications. The social media policy is nearly finalized; retired attorney Terry Sherman has reviewed and revised the latest draft and Sol Cuenco has approved it; the Staff Parish Relations Chair needs to review and sign off on it. The church has received a generous donation of \$50,000;

\$20,000 of which will go towards hybrid worship and the Online Church Campus. May God continue to bless our work.

Editor's Note: This report has been lightly edited for newsletter style and format.

Did You Know?

According to a <u>survey conducted by Pew Research Center</u> in 2021, about 36% of adults attend weekly worship services, with another 33% attending sporadically. Among adults aged 18 to 29, weekly attendance of a worship service dropped to 17%. In a <u>different study</u>, the research group found that one in five Americans share their faith online, which is similar to the rates of viewing religious television content. Nearly half of those surveyed see someone else share religious content in a typical week. The researchers' conclusion is that online religious content complements rather than replaces religious services. Interestingly, the same survey reveals that belief in God and time spent in prayer don't necessarily track in lockstep with those figures.

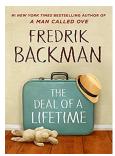
According to an <u>August 2022 article</u>, #ChristianTikTok has 18 billion views. The author compares this hashtag to secular hashtags like #Beauty with 100 billion views and #Foodlovers with 2 billion—not a blockbuster number, but definitely relevant.

Most people build religious identity before age twelve. Today, <u>18% of children under twelve</u> have their own smartphone.

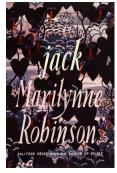


Spiritual Growth

Between the Bookends

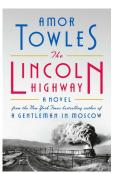


The Deal of a Lifetime, Frederick Backman. Author Backman creates a very different character here, as he did in A Man Called Ove. In this latest book, his character is dying of cancer. He knows when he is gone he will be remembered because of what he has accumulated: properties, businesses and many assets. This he feels and knows. However, to achieve this measure of success, he has sacrificed having a family life and especially a relationship with his son, which he realizes and regrets. To compensate for his negligence, he decides to make a deal of a lifetime.



Jack, Marilynne Robinson. This beautifully written book is the fourth in the author's Gilead series. Jack, the son of Gilead's Presbyterian minister, is the black sheep of his family. Seen through the eyes of others in the earlier books, he is a nonconforming, isolated soul—and Jack views himself the same way. Leaving Gilead and residing in segregated, post-World War II St. Louis, he continues his ne'er-do-well existence until he meets and falls in love with Della, an African American high school teacher. The path they tread leads to instances of great affection and acceptance as they bring love to each other but also to instances of torment as they face the dire aspects of segre-

gation. Robinson brings us a story of flawed beings and flawed communities, but also one which allows for redemption and grace. You can also find titles *Gilead* and *Lila* in our church library.



The Lincoln Highway, Amor Towles. This book is a road trip but also a coming-of-age story, a book juxtaposing characters of good intentions with others of not-so-good intentions. The tale unfolds via the varying viewpoints of the main characters. Following the death of his father and foreclosure on their home and farmland, eighteen-year-old Emmett Watson must care for himself and Billy, his precocious eight-year-old brother. Together, they decide to leave Kansas behind and head for a new life in California. From that premise, the tale becomes ever more quirky and adventurous thanks to the introduction of Duchess and Wooley. Unexpected turns propel the narrative as

the main characters interact with a wide variety of characters who entertain, surprise and occasionally even delight the reader.

Happy New Year from your Library Committee!



Spiritual Growth

Great Decisions 2023

Begins Sunday, February 19, 11:15 a.m. Location TBA

What are the great global policy decisions facing the US and how should Christians respond? Our church will hold a series of six weekly discussions on critical global issues using a guide prepared by the Foreign Policy Association (FPA). This program is part of an annual, nationwide program, whereby groups of concerned citizens throughout the U.S. will discuss why the issues are important and why we should be concerned.



Energy Geopolitics, session one. Photo for Great Decisions by Foreign Policy Association.

Lyn Arscott facilitates, showing a twenty-minute video prepared by the FPA on each topic, followed by a discussion. The discussion se-

ries guidebooks are available from the FPA website for \$35 plus postage. https://www.fpa.org/great_decisions/?act=gd_materials.

If you are a regular member of Sunday school classes, Lyn has your email and will send the briefing notes every week. If you are not on that list, send an email to lynarscott@comcast.net to be placed on the list.

Energy Geopolitics

Access to oil and gas has long held an influence over the politics of individual nations and their relations with others. But as more countries move toward sustainable energy, and supply chain shortages affect the availability of oil and gas, how will this change the way in which the United States interacts with the outside world? *By Carolyn Kissane*

War Crimes

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has resulted in widespread charges of war crimes and calls for justice. But what exactly are war crimes? Opinions of what constitutes a war crime have evolved, as have ways to identify and punish the perpetrators. How will the war crimes committed in Ukraine be dealt with? By Francine Hirsch

China and the US

For the past ten years, the United States and China have been locked in a competition for who has the greatest global influence. One major point of contention is the status of Taiwanese sovereignty, which has become even more relevant recently with the possibility that Russia's invasion of Ukraine



Spiritual Growth

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may prompt China to take similar action regarding Taiwan. How will the United States engage a China which is increasingly seeking to expand its sphere of influence? By David Lampton

Economic Warfare

Waging economic warfare consists of a variety of measures from implementing sanctions to fomenting labor strikes. Such tools are utilized by states to hinder their enemies, and in the case of the United States have been used as far back as the early 19th century. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, economic warfare has been the main means for the west to challenge Russia. How effective will these sanctions be at convincing Russia to cease its war? By Jonathan Chanis

Global Famine

Fears of global food shortages have followed Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has disrupted grain shipments from the major grain producer. But what about countries and regions that were suffering before this impending shortage? How is famine defined, and how is it different from simple food shortages? What if any remedies are there? By Daniel Maxwell

Climate Migration

As climate change accelerates and drought and rising sea levels become more common, millions of people in affected regions must uproot themselves and seek safety elsewhere. Who are these affected individuals, and how might the United States aid them, and be affected by the migration? By Karen Jacobsen

Advent Adventures: Thank You, Don Johnson

Our lovely wooden candles came from Don's generosity. You might have seen them in the December 18 worship service. We painted them as part of our Advent Adventures series of craft projects.







Out Into the World

New Dialogue for Change Class! Six-week Series Begins January 8, 11:15 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. Fireside Room and Zoom

Dialogue for Change is an adult education class that began as education in antiracism and now continues with brave conversations to wake us up to a variety of unjust events around us and to our own unconscious bias and hurtful behaviors.

For six weeks, we will be exploring the experience and issues of LGBTQ+ persons, and we will learn from things other churches have done to live more fully into an identity as a Reconciling Church.



Three and a half years ago, SRVUMC voted to become a Reconciling Ministry of the United Methodist Church...and then there was COVID! The pandemic and other things have slowed our progress in truly becoming the welcoming place we envisioned. This Dialogue for Change series will take us through the delivery of understanding, acceptance, welcome, and finally, support/advocacy and safety for LGBTQ+ persons.

The class format alternates between discussion of short videos and guest speakers. We will have presenters from PFLAG, San Ramon Valley Schools, and another open and affirming church. Then, the series concludes February 12, when our congregation celebrates our years as a reconciling congregation, with a special program and all-church potluck! *For more information, contact lucin-da.huffaker@gmail.com.*

Dialogue for Change—January

- 8 Intersections: Race, LGBTQ+, and Christians
- 15 Gender 101, an educational presentation by San Ramon Valley PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
- How to Talk About What the Bible Says, and Other Helpful Responses
- 29 Ask Us Anything, with PFLAG

Dialogue for Change—February

- 5 Actions of an Inclusive Church
- Supporting LGBTQ+ Youth, with Dr. Hong Nguyen, Director of Educational Equity for the San Ramon Valley Unified School District

Also February 12: Congregational Celebration! Three and a half years as a Reconciling Congregation, with guest speaker Carol Gilliland and an all-church potluck!



Communion

Special Sunday: Human Relations Day January 15, 2023

Human Relations Day is a denomination-wide Special Sunday encouraging better human relations through community and youth involvement for United Methodist congregations. This Special Sunday occurs the Sunday before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. Gifts received for the offering build toward King's vision of "the beloved community" through programs such as Community Developers and United Methodist Voluntary Services and Youth Offender Rehabilitation Programs.

- Fifty-seven percent of the funds received support community developer programs. These funds build, maintain, promote and strengthen racial-ethnic minority congregations through local UMC congregations. Community developers engage depending on a community's needs.
- Thirty-three percent of the funds received support The United
 Methodist Voluntary Services (UMVS). This program assists congregations, volunteer-based
 groups, and programs in challenging unjust political, social and economic systems which threaten
 people's livelihoods.
- Ten percent of the funds received support rehabilitation programs. These programs strengthen youth empowerment programs with positive avenues for youth participation in their communities through the churches, mentoring programs, and boys'/girls' clubs.

For more than half a century, United Methodists have observed this churchwide special Sunday in recognition of the message Jesus demonstrated during his life: All of God's children are important. Content for this brief article is borrowed from this UMCGiving page.





Preschool

Happy New Year! 2023 brings exciting beginnings for our preschool as we welcome our new director, Christine Pezza! Read on to learn more about her as she takes on the guidance of our sweet community. Following this newsletter you will get to hear from Christine about all the exciting preschool happenings each month.

Hello, my name is Christine Pezza, and I am very excited to join the United Methodist Preschool team! I have been part of the San Ramon Valley preschool community for the past 30 years as both a teacher and a director and have had the privilege of interacting with countless wonderful children and their families.

A little bit about my preschool journey: My family moved from the East Coast to Danville my senior year of high school. I have lived in Danville for most of my adult life after being born in Pennsylvania and growing up in New Jersey. I have family in Nashville, Scottsdale, San Luis Obisbo, Philadel- Christine Pezza: "I enjoy phia and Washington, D.C., including six cherished nieces and nephews that nature and firmly believe help keep me on my toes!



fresh air has restorative. healing properties."

When I enrolled in the Regional Occupational Program at Monte Vista High School, I immediately fell in love with working with young children. Little did I know it would become my lifelong passion! I thoroughly enjoy watching children explore the world around them. Providing children a safe, nurturing, creative environment where they can thrive emotionally, socially, physically and academically through play-based, developmentally appropriate, hands-on experiences is what makes my heart smile! As an early childhood educator, it is my mission to instill a lifelong love of learning. I thoroughly embrace collaborating with teachers and parents to ensure each child is given the best possible early learning experience filled with confidence and joy.

From 1994 to 2020, I was fortunate to spend my days joyfully in the same preschool location. When that school closed, I wasn't sure I would ever have the opportunity to be part of another preschool community. I can honestly say, from my very first interaction with the Preschool Commission, I knew I had found another home. The philosophy and overall welcoming culture of the preschool and church community gives me faith that I can continue my life's work in a setting that values young children and their families in a collaborative and loving environment.

I am honored to be the new Director at UMP and look forward to meeting and getting to know everyone! Please stop by to say hello!

Warmest regards,

Christine Pezza



Family Ministry

Calendar

Pizza and Movie Night: Friday, January 27, 5 to 7:30 p.m. Wesley Hall. Everyone welcome! RSVP to Laura Roy at lroy@srvumc.org. Movie TBD soon.

"Messy Church" Coming in February. What is Messy Church? Messy Church is a form of church for children and adults that involves creativity, celebration and hospitality. It is an all-age, fresh expression of church that offers counter-cultural transformation of faith life through people coming together to be, to make, to eat and to celebrate God.



Sunday school classes begin at 10 a.m.

- Tot Spot for the infant to 4-year-olds.
- TK to 2nd grades—Upstairs above preschool in Otterbein room (Laura Roy leads)
- 3rd to 5th grades—Upstairs in Wesley 203 (Tom Roy leads)

January Sunday School Lessons:

Think Tank: Put your knowledge to the test!

Knowledge is learning something new so you can be better at whatever you do.

Week One

The Wise Men Visit Jesus: Matthew 2:1-12

Never stop searching for what's true.

Week Two

The Boy Jesus at the Temple: Luke 2:41-52

Knowing God is the most important thing.

Week Three

Jesus' Baptism: John 1:19-42, John 3:22-36

When you discover something new, it can change you.

Week Four

Jesus Is Tempted in the Desert: Luke 4:1-13

Remembering what's true can help you make the wise choice.

Week Five

John the Baptist in Prison: Matthew 11:1-6

If you don't understand something, ask.

MEMORY VERSE: "The Lord gives wisdom. Knowledge and understanding come from his mouth." —Proverbs 2:6, NIrV



Celebrations

Birthdays

1 Marilyn Clarke

2 Steve Marohn

3 Ethan Helms

Brian Roberts

4 Rebecca Ten Elshof

9 Terry Bailey

Conner Merchant

10 Chris Hoff

12 Scott Davis

Berry Scott

13 Bill Nelson

14 Nancy Tiedemann

Mark Warwick

15 Julian Bybel

Liz George

Shadaab Kanwal

Dory Schramm

16 Peggy Pierce

Sam Sidhom

17 Gerry Carothers

Jean Desmond

18 Elaine Halliday (92)

Mike Kelly

Gail Smith

19 Cosima Sepull

20 Nancy Garnick

21 Kim Risedorph

22 Bob Leyman

23 Jan Foulds

24 Barb McWilliams

25 Teri Armanini

Grace Benzler

Roger Ehlers

26 Nick Toma

27 Doug Barton

28 Bill Dever

Nancy Harrison

Karen Stepper

30 Alicia Rossini

Deirdree Walsh-Krumrei

31 Lisa Chapman

Anniversaries

- 3 Andrea & John Siebert
- 5 Judy & Bob Baker
- 7 Jo Ann & Vin Hirsch (62)

- 9 Linda & Alex Farhang
- 11 Nadia & Bruce Koliha
- 21 Wendi & Michael Cerda
- 29 Danni & Dan Sherman



Accountant

Among Ourselves

Health Concerns

Sharon (Susan Dowling's mother) Kay Jones

Floy Blair Barb McWilliams

Bob Brown Mary Spediacci

Continued Prayers For

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

Our Christian Sympathy

Prayers for the family of **Elizabeth Du Chene**, who passed in December.

Thank You From Sylvia Benzler

Thank you to all who called, texted, stopped by and sent cards during Bruce's illness and after he died. The outpouring of caring has been uplifting and comforting to me and my family. I see and feel the "shining inner lights" of this church family. Thank you from my heart.

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