



The

Valley Messenger

A publication of San Ramon Valley United Methodist Church. A Community on a Journey

LENT BEGINS ON FEBRUARY 14!

Dear Beloved SRVUMC Family,

This year, Ash Wednesday falls on February 14 – Valentine’s Day! This may be a bit of a conundrum for you spiritual folks who also happen to be the romantic type (like me!). While I love celebrating the day dedicated to love and romance and heart shaped boxes filled with chocolate, that may have to take a back seat to a more important focus for the day: an intentional start to the 40-day season of repentance and introspection that we call Lent.

In Christian tradition, Lent has been the time in which believers would prepare themselves for the celebration of Easter. Often, it was the season in which new converts would go through a dedicated time of prayer and learning in order to get ready for baptism on Easter Sunday. Today, many Christians observe a “holy Lent” by “giving up” certain things (dependencies, comforts, pleasures) and “taking up” spiritual disciplines (prayer, bible reading, alms giving). I have personally found the season of Lent a profoundly spiritual and impactful time for me. Through whatever Lenten practices I would commit to, I always come to discover two things about me.

The first is simply how weak I really am. It is not at all surprising to me that I find myself constantly tempted by the things that I have chosen to give up. While I wish I was a bit more disciplined and demonstrated greater self-control, the truth is that my humanity and all the associated tendencies remain at war with my spiritual commitments. And yes, there are many times I end up caving into my temptations and break my Lenten promises.

The second is how much I really need Jesus and His strength in my life. As much as I strive to be holy and try keep a pure heart during this very important season, I am just not capable of doing it on my own. I need my Savior and Lord to lead and guide me, and I need to surrender my power to His. One of the Scripture verses that I hold close to my heart every Lent is 2 Corinthians 12:9: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made

February 2024

- 1-2 Lent Begins on February 14!
- 3 Announcements
- 4-7 Spiritual Growth
- 8 Out Into the World
- 9 February Communion Offering
- 10 Preschool
- 11 NexGen Ministry
- 12 Birthdays & Anniversaries

13-14 Among Ourselves

Next Issue: March 2024

Have something you’d like included in next month’s Messenger? Please submit your articles to Sarah Stribling at media@srvumc.org by **February 15, 2024**.

Announcements

From Page 1

perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me."

I'm not sure if you resonate with what I experience during the Lenten season, but I hope that you will choose to journey with me during the 40 days of Lent that has the great potential to transform our hearts and deepen our faith in Jesus. By the way, I will be preaching a new sermon series during Lent called, "re/MARK/able: Discovering Jesus Through the Gospel of Mark." I'm excited to share this inspiring and challenging set of messages with you. And I hope that you will be excited to join each and every Sunday in Lent in order to prepare your hearts for what I know will be an amazing Easter celebration this year! And it all begins with Ash Wednesday on February 14! We will gather in the sanctuary at 7 PM for a special service with music and the imposition of ashes.

Actually, on second thought, maybe Valentine's Day and Ash Wednesday being on the same day this year is not really a bad thing. After all, St. Valentine was martyred on February 14. If anyone knows what it means to means to "give up" something for the sake of following Jesus, it just might be this patron saint of love and romance. So, reschedule your Valentine's dinner, bring your sweetheart, or simply bring your own heart and join me at the Ash Wednesday service to begin this 40-day journey as we commit to observing a holy Lent. It's going to be a life transforming season!

In Preparation & Hope,
P. Sam | syun@srvumc.org

P.S. A couple Lenten devotional resources that I want to encourage you to use: 1) A daily online devotional on the theme of "Following Jesus" written by our Annual Conference Core Team (I serve as the chairperson) and made available online at www.cnumc.org (more details to come), and 2) The Last Week by Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan (can be purchased online <https://www.amazon.com/Last-Week-Gospels-Really-Jerusalem/dp/0060872608>.)



Ash Wednesday is February 14th

Our Ash Wednesday service will be in the sanctuary on February 14th at 7PM. Join us for special music, plus Pastor Sam will give the imposition of ashes. It's the bravest worship service of the year where we acknowledge our mortality. We remember our need to repent and that we are dust. Don't miss this challenging and sacred kick-off to the Lenten season!

Announcements



WINTER NIGHTS
Family Shelter

Coming Soon: Winter Nights

SRVUMC will be hosting Winter Nights (unhoused) families again this year from April 8 - 22. We will be providing meals and help with such things as tutoring, children's activities, and overnight hosts the first week, and our partner church, St. Isidore's, is responsible for the second week. We could have up to a maximum of 5 families, or 25 guests. Look for announcements in the next month or two about signups to help. This is a really fun hands-on opportunity to serve your community! Please contact [Nancy Garnick](#) or [Kal Peters](#) if interested or to answer any questions.

Trinity Center Volunteers Off to Strong Start

The Trinity Center Winter Shelter effort is well underway! SRVUMC volunteer teams continue serving Friday dinners there through March 8. Special thanks to all the leaders and volunteers who are helping to fight hunger during these cold months!



Volunteer at White Pony Express



Volunteer to sort food or make care packages on February 17th from 9-11AM for hospital patients (material supplied) at White Pony Express in Pleasant Hill. Parking is very limited, so carpools are highly encouraged. Click [here](#) to sign up!

Lunar New Year Starts February 10

Get ready for the year of the dragon! According to [USA Today](#), Lunar New Year is celebrated in several countries including China, Vietnam, South Korea, the Philippines, and Singapore. Like New Year's Eve celebration in the United States, this is a time of letting go of the past and making room for what is to come. According to Chinese astrology, this year is the year of the Dragon. The Dragon symbolizes prosperity, strength, charisma, good luck, and justice. It's going to be a great year!

Coming Soon: Israel/Palestine Teach-In

The situation in Israel/Palestine is dire and complex. Having reliable, unbiased information about both sides of the issues can help guide our conversations, our donations, and our civic actions like voting. SRVUMC is planning a "teach-in" event specifically for our congregation on a Saturday morning in February, date to be determined. Please watch for up-to-date information in the Friday Memo!



Spiritual Growth

Jesus in America

Sundays, 9-9:50AM

Online and in the Fireside Room



February 4—Millerites, dispensational millennialism, Civil War, Lost Cause, Sojourner Truth

Other upcoming topics: Slavery and its impacts (mid-19th Century), Post Civil War and the Rise of Spiritualism (Late 19th Century), Rise of Fundamentalism (Late 19th and Early 20th Century).

Click [here](#) to sign up!

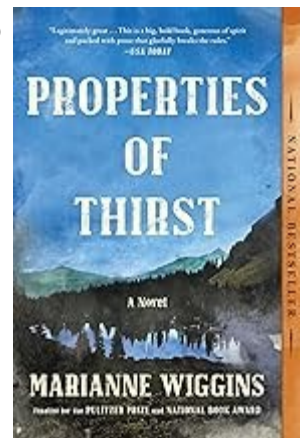
Afternoon Book Group

February 19th, 1PM

Church Library

On **February 19th**, the book is Properties of Thirst by Marianne Wiggins. Prior to WWII, Japanese internment camps are being built and water use is also being debated by Northern and Southern California. This historical fiction book gives us a new lens on history.

Contact Jenny Swanson at jenny.swanson646@gmail.com with questions or suggestions.



Did You Know?

According to Pew Research Center, the average person reads 12 books a year. Make Properties of Thirst by Marianne Wiggins one of them!

Spiritual Growth

UMeUs February Schedule

Potluck & Presentation. Tuesday, February 6th, Noon, Wesley Center. First Tuesday of the month.

Please bring a dish to share, or stop at Safeway on your way over and join us for a conversation and question and answer session with [our](#) Afghan Family [who](#) we are sponsoring. We always have plenty of food, it's your company we want!

UMeUs
— YOU / ME / US



Lunch with Friends. Tuesday, February 20th, Noon, Wesley Center. Third Tuesday of the month.

Please join us for a romantic lunch of the best spaghetti and meatballs in the Valley, zesty [homemade](#) Caesar Salad, fresh hot garlic bread, and Italian ricotta cheese cake for dessert! Best \$10 meal in The Valley!

February is Black History Month!

Take this opportunity to be intentional about educating yourself about the history, culture, and achievements of the Black community. In case you're looking for ideas, [here's](#) a link to 10 resources to help you get started. [Here's](#) a link to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous "Beyond Vietnam" speech. As Dr. King says in the antiwar speech, "A time comes when silence is betrayal." If you've never heard the speech before, it's sure to generate discussion. The relevance of Dr. King's words continue to echo down to our present time.




Mark Your Calendars for UMeUs in March!

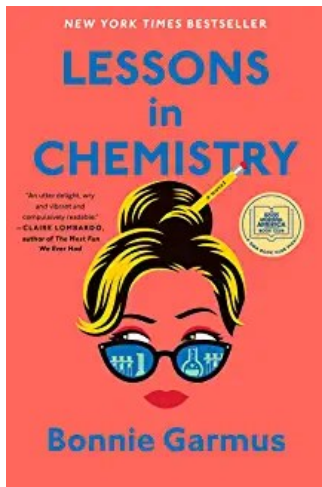
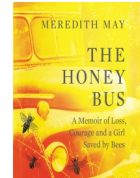
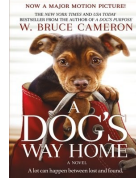
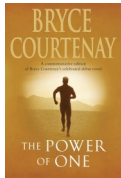
Potluck & Presentation. Tuesday, March 5th, Noon. First Tuesday of the month.

Lunch with Friends. Tuesday, March 19th, Noon. The third the Tuesday of the month – **wear GREEN!**

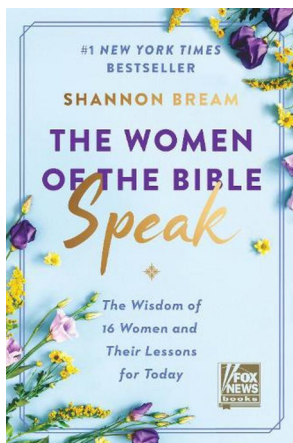
Spiritual Growth



Happy Valentine's Day! Have a heart!  Please return your library book as soon as you have finished reading so that someone else can enjoy it. Especially these—please.



Garmus, Bonnie. Lessons in Chemistry. This is a lively tale filled with lessons in life as well as lessons in chemistry. The plot involves a before-her-time chemist who loses her graduate academic credential and then her job due to gender discrimination in '50s/'60s CA, becomes an unemployed single mother, and eventually attains financial stability by hosting a TV cooking show. However, the book offers the reader so much more than this thumbnail sketch. There is wonderful humor throughout, understandable pathos in difficult, dark situations, quirky characters all dealing with their own problems, and several mysteries which need solving. The author manages to give us a heroine who is practical, resilient, funny, and determined to live according to standards she believes in. Additionally, her subplots enhance the action, develop characters, move the main plot smoothly, and address numerous societal problems. It is a good read. Enjoy!



Bream, Shannon. The Women of the Bible Speak. The lives of sixteen women of the Bible are chronicled here. The women are from both the Old and New Testaments, display a wide range of backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and abilities but all offer tangible lessons which can be helpful as one journeys through life. Each of the eight chapters compares and contrasts the stories of two of the women. You can read the chapters in any order and the book is one you may find yourself returning to over time. Whether you are reading this book on your own or as part of a group, the included study guides could prove helpful to you.

Spiritual Growth

The Prayer Ministry Team Sylvia Hemmerich

Background

On July 25, 2023, the Prayer Ministry Team, a brainchild of Pastor Sam was officially launched at Bridges Restaurant and on social media (Facebook) on August 1, 2023. Why an official launch at a restaurant? To break bread as well. Sharing food is a way to bring people together. Food has a place at every gathering and sets the stage for a more relaxed atmosphere and can even inspire creative ideas. The Prayer Ministry is a ministry of the heart. It is about discernment and commitment.

Purpose

To encourage and promote prayer within the church, plan and keep church members praying faithfully on an ongoing basis making prayer a part of everything they do.

Goal

To plan and conduct prayer meetings (or training sessions), and help lead the church members to an active life of prayer.

Duties

- Receive and pray for concerns and requests from individuals from the congregation;
- Follow up with the requester with a personal and qualitative reply;
- Be available to pray with someone if the need arises;
- Pray for the various ministry teams of SRVUMC;
- Pray for church leadership



Decked in red, the color of the Holy Spirit, The Prayer Team smiles for a group photo.



The Prayer Team poses for a quick selfie at Bridges Restaurant.

Meeting Schedule

3rd Wednesday of the month

Prayer Ministry Team Composition

The team started with three longtime members of SRVUMC namely Lee Rust, Marla Schleicher, and Sylvia Hemmerich whose UMC membership also included Grace UMC (San Ramon) and Lynnewood UMC. Sandy Gsand and Suzan Rowland joined the Prayer Ministry Team in the latter part of August and November 2023, respectively. Pastor Sam and Sylvia co-lead the Prayer Ministry Team.

Out Into the World

Nayebi Family Update Bob Baker

There is lots of news regarding the Nayebi family. (The Nayebi's recently emigrated to Danville from Afghanistan via Pakistan.) The church raised over \$14,000 in the Christmas offering for the family. Thanks go to Pastor Sam and Lyn Arscott for the terrific event introducing the family to the congregation.

Kal Peters bought a 2009 Camry hybrid car for the family with the Christmas offering money and is working on getting insurance. The insurance is turning out to be the hard part. Thanks to Jim and Anne Burke for also working on this project.

Amin Nayebi (the father) recently got a full time job at Mental Health Connections (formerly "Putnam Clubhouse") in Concord and is enjoying it immensely. It compliments his non-profit experience in Afghanistan. Dave Coombs gets major credit for facilitating Amin's job application.



Rob Rudow is working with Amin on immigration Visa issues, health insurance, and networking. Not to mention, driving lessons!

Laila (Amin's wife) is cooking for the family and their host, Bill Small. She is applying for part time jobs, is going to SRVUMC Yoga classes, and is working on her computer skills with Lucinda Huffaker.

Yasna (4 yrs old) is going to the SRVUMC Preschool. Jerry Ricker is organizing rides to and from church for Yasna. (Jerry needs help on this, by the way).

Bassit (8 yrs old) is attending Greenbrook Elementary School and is attending an after-school program at Greenbrook, thanks to a scholarship with Kid's Country arranged by Rob Rudow.

The family got a taste of Christmas, thanks to Sherrie Fraser and Holly-Ann Melton doing some special shopping.

The family's needs are extensive, and we are working with host Bill Small to satisfy them. It takes time and lots of help for an immigrant family to get settled in America. The most important issue at present is getting Amin's asylum application submitted. This is a big job. Once the application is submitted and accepted, the family will be protected from deportation until the final decision is rendered. We think it will take a couple years to get a final determination.

Contact [Bob Baker](#) if you would like to help.



Communion



Our February offering will go to Hope Solutions! Hope Solutions was formerly Contra Costa Interfaith Housing (CCIH). By whatever name you have known this local organization has been addressing the need for stable housing in Contra Costa County since 1991. Hope Solutions maintains service sites in three Contra Costa locations. offers supportive housing for individuals and families, client-centered support including mental health counseling, employment support, and academic enrichment for youth. Hope Solutions 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.

The Resident Empowerment Program (REP) addresses the root causes of poverty by encouraging affordable housing residents to advocate for affordable housing, exercising their right to vote, and expressing their views via peaceful protest. REP also equips rising leaders with skills such as public speaking and critical thinking skills necessary to ask meaningful questions and speak their truth. Learn more about ways Hope Solutions helps people move into stable housing by visiting their [web-site](#) to view their list of programs.

Save the Date: Hope Solutions Gala

Our church is a community partner to Hope Solutions, a well-respected charitable organization that helps end homelessness by providing housing and support services to more than 2,000 marginalized families and individuals here in our own backyard. 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.

Giving your heart and resources would be a direct way to support this quality community outreach. **Their annual fundraiser gala is on April 20th, 2024.** Click [here](#) to donate. Here are some of the ways you can help:

*Give to the special missions Communion offering on February 18th. Our goal is to raise \$3,000.

*Donate an auction item: a week at a vacation home, gift certificates, themed baskets, nice wine, theater/sports event tickets, golf rounds, etc.

*Attend the gala with your friends.

You can make a significant difference. Please contact [Anne Kuelz](#) for more information.

Preschool

United Methodist Preschool Now Open for Enrollment

Our United Methodist Preschool is currently enrolling for the upcoming 2024-2025 School Year! Enrollment is open for returning families as well as new families. If you, or someone you know, would like to enroll, please contact our preschool office at 925-837-2788, email us at preschool-office@srvumc.org or cpez-za@srvumc.org.



A crucial first step in our enrollment process is a tour. We know families have many choices for preschool in the San Ramon Valley and we want to show them why we believe United Methodist Preschool is a hidden gem. The tour allows us to familiarize families with the goals and mission of our Preschool. When families tour they get to see our beautiful campus and our phenomenal backyard playground. They have the opportunity to meet our incredible teachers and see our fantastic program in action.



Our beloved Preschool is supported by our wonderful, engaged families, our dedicated Preschool Commission and our entire United Methodist Community. We have so much to offer the children in our care and we want to ensure more children have the opportunity to thrive in our nurturing environment. So please, help us spread the word! **ENROLLMENT** is open at United Methodist Preschool!

Youth Group Happenings

Sunday School for middle school/high school students is available at **10AM each Sunday except for the first Sunday of each month.**

Youth Group every Sunday (in the Youth Room, upstairs in Wesley Center). **5-6:30PM Middle and High School Dinner and Youth Fellowship** (We make dinner together.)



NexGen Ministry

New Director of Next Generation Ministry: Jamere Crawford

It is with great joy and excitement that our search for staffing our ministry to youth and children has now been completed! As of January 30th, Jamere Crawford has joined the SRVUMC team as the Director of Next Generation Ministry. Some of you may be familiar with the name as he actually served on staff for a few years prior to the pandemic as the Youth Ministry Director. For those that worked with him, especially the youth and parents, Jamere is remembered with great fondness. During Jamere's time on staff, our youth group was vibrant, active, and growing. When asked of our Youth Ministry Intern, Justin Byers, what he thought about the possibility of Jamere coming back to SRVUMC, he replied with a big smile on his face, "That would be amazing!"



Jamere and Katie pose for the camera on a beautiful sunny day.



Aww! This cutie is Katie and Jamere's baby boy.

Well, that possibility is now a reality, and we have great expectation and high hopes for a new and dynamic season of growth for both our children and youth ministries moving into the future under

Jamere's leadership. Jamere most recently served as the NextGen Director at Embrace Church, the ministry that our very own Pastor Sam planted and led for the past 8 years. In fact, before coming to SRVUMC, Pastor Sam had hired Jamere to lead their children's and youth ministry and had worked directly with him for a year. Jamere has also had extensive experience with at risk youth during his time at Larkin Street Youth Services, Huckleberry Youth Programs, and Boys & Girls Club of Alameda (just to name a few).

Outside of his passion for children and youth, Jamere spends most of his time enjoying family life with his wife Katie and baby boy, Langston (born on June 19, 2023). He is a huge Dallas Cowboys fan, but we will still welcome him into the 49'ers territory!

Great thanks to our search team: Bill Fulcher, Lindsay, Hizartka, Gemma Sepull, Andrea Bourgeois, Sarah Rossini, and Pastor Sam. And great thanks to the hard working SPRC and Church Council as they worked diligently and efficiently in the approval and hiring process!

The best is yet to come!

Keep Up with NextGen Ministry

Make sure you stay up to date with all the children and youth ministry happenings by visiting our Family Ministry page [here](#) and our Youth page [here](#)! You won't want to miss what's next!

Celebrations

Birthdays

1	Renée Beck	14	Chuck Lindquist
	Stan Nakaso		Eleanor Toney
	Amy Sidhom		Katie Ward
	John Siebert	15	Debbie Hammond
2	Harry Knapp		Teri Hawk
	Ted Nguyen		Jim Ludlam
	Cynthia Stephenson	16	Anne Burk
3	Le Anne Jacobi		Carol Sayers
	Linda Jimerson		Linnea Winter
4	Megan Buckley	18	Nick Item
5	Kendall Andres	19	John Pavel
	Doug Beck	20	Laura Altamirano
	Melanie Hasik		Damian Lindquist
7	Debbie Kelly		John Vanderwerf
	Katy Mannell	22	Lindsay Koos
8	Marge Brower (100)		Hannah Niederauer
	Marilyn Hansen	23	Kal Peters
9	Laurie Stocking	24	Elisa Ericson
10	Dave Pierce		Christine Ritter
11	Bob Dominici		Sherrie Fraser
	Beverly McAdams	25	Andrea Bourgeois
12	Joanne Knapp		Joan Pierce
	Millie Loper (95)	26	Suzanne Stephens Ricker
13	Eleanor Gross	28	Maggie Rossini
	Lisa Jancarik		Laura Sanchez (95)
	Maggie Stienstra		

Anniversaries

3	Anne & Jim Burk (61)
4	Nancy & Cliff Campbell
4	Candice & Steve Newburn
6	Donna & Chuck Lindquist (53)
16	Kal & Kevin Peters

**BEARETH
BELIEVETH
HOPETH
ENDURETH**
All Things



Among Ourselves

Holidays Observed 2024

Typically, SRVUMC church office observes the following holidays and will be closed on the following dates:

Holiday	Date Observed
New Year's Day	Monday, January 1
Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday	Monday, January 15
President's Day	Monday, February 19
Memorial Day	Monday, May 27
Juneteenth Day of Remembrance	Wednesday June 19
Independence Day	Thursday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, September 2
Veteran's Day	Friday, November 11
Thanksgiving Day and the Friday After	Thursday, November 28 and Friday November 29
Christmas Day and the Day After	Wednesday, December 25 and Thursday, December 26
New Year's Day	Wednesday, January 1, 2025

Among Ourselves

Health Concerns

Bill Dastic, Liz Field, Kay Jones, Barb McWilliams, Pastor Ray Campton.

Continued Prayers For

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

Sympathy For

To Marti Sketchley and her family on the death of her husband, Sketch.
To Ida Dandridge and her family on the death of her husband, Gordon.
To Greg Koos and his family on the death of his mother, Rosemary.
To Susan Madden and her family on the death of her husband, Andy.

In Need of Prayer?

You can always submit a prayer request online by clicking [here!](#) Our awesome prayer team and Pastor Sam would love to pray for you!

Special Thanks

To the SRVUMC Family,

Our hearts were deeply touched by the outpouring of love and support we received following Johnathan's death. Your presence at Johnathan's memorial service and your thoughtful cards and condolences have provided immense comfort to our family. We are truly grateful for your kindness.

With heartfelt thanks,

The Robinson Family

SRVUMC

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Office Hours: Weekdays 9:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. except Wednesdays 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

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Ministers EVERYONE • Lead Pastor Sam Yun (ext. 107)

Office/HR Manager

Laura Roy (ext. 106)

Preschool Director

Christine Pezza (ext. 113)

Director of Facilities and A/V

Sam Hawk

Accountant

Priya Gupta

Accounts Payable/Payroll

Susan Madden

Accounts Receivable

Michelle Cooke

Music Director

Jeffrey Howe

Organist

Nadia Koliha

Director of Communications

Sarah Stribling

Office Administrator

Patsy Kyles

Director of Next Generation Ministry

Jamere Crawford

