

Shepherd of the Desert Monthly Newsletter September 2026



Church Council

President: Keith LaShier

Vice President: Sheri Thirkell

Treasurer: Nancy Hempy

Council Secretary: Nancy Fisher

Council Member: Jane Hansen

Council Member: Kim Barnes-Blumberg

Mission Statement

"To be a congregation that puts the Love of Christ into action from one generation to another from our community to our world"

Church Staff

Senior Pastor: John Maroni

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Admin. Secretary: Kristen Wood

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To watch online Sunday Worship and more information about S.O.D you can visit our website. **www.sdaz.org**

Connected in Faith Across the Miles

"I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert." — Isaiah 43:19

Living in Sun City, we are blessed with a truly unique and beautiful community. On any given Sunday, you can look around our sanctuary and see a gathering of God's people whose roots stretch all across the country. Whether your home state is Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Idaho, Maine, Minnesota, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming (did I miss one?) —we have all been brought together at Shepherd of the Desert.

Because our congregation brings together so many different life journeys and regional backgrounds, we have a deep appreciation for what it means to be part of a larger, connected church body. Our denomination is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Last summer, our national body gathered right down the road in Phoenix for the ELCA Churchwide Assembly. During this historic gathering, the ELCA elected the **Rev. Yehiel Curry** to serve as our new Presiding Bishop.

Bishop Curry—who previously served as bishop of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and as a local pastor and mission developer—brings a pastoral heart, rich experience, and deep dedication to our shared mission. His election also marks a historic moment as he has become the first Black presiding bishop of the ELCA.

Reflecting on his journey, Bishop Curry spoke with gratitude about how the wider church's support and investment allowed his ministry to bloom. His story reminds us that no matter where we start—whether in the Midwest, the Pacific Northwest, the East Coast, or the Southwest—we are all nurtured by the same living water and bound together in one shared calling.

Here in Sun City, we are part of a nationwide family. Let's remember Presiding Bishop Curry, his family, and all our Church leaders in prayer. May God, our heavenly Father – the one who makes a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert – be with all the congregations throughout America.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor John Maroni

Ongoing September Activities

Church office will be closed September 7th for Labor Day. Pastor John will be having Bible Study.

Bible Study with Pastor John

Monday at 10:00 a.m. Bring your bible and a beverage. We are meet in the Founders Room. We are reading the lessons for the upcoming weekend services.

Paint Night

September 9th at 5:30 p.m. Please make sure to sign up so we can plan on snacks and supplies. Bring a beverage there is snacks provided. This is the painting for September Paint Night.



Game Night

September 25th at 6:00 p.m. in the Founders Room. Bring a game or join a game. Snacks provided but bring a beverage of your choice.

Pancake Breakfast

September 26th 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in Walton Hall. The price is right FREE!!! This is a free breakfast for the community and S.O.D.

Council Presidents Message – September 2026

Thanks to everyone who has been able to come to our Saturday and Sunday services this summer. It has been a tad warm at times and that may have inclined some of our members to enjoy the Sunday worship streaming services from the comfort of their homes.

September 22nd is the start of the fall season and long-time Arizona residents know it may not cool down immediately, but cooler temperatures are coming.

Our members have continued to enjoy the monthly Bingo night, win some great prizes, enjoy the food provided them, and catch up on meeting your friends, and some new folks who have recently been attending our church services.

I have seen photos from the talented group who enjoy the Paint Night events. Those photos show many smiling faces as everybody is proud to show the results of their creative skills.

We thank Sam Garr for helping this summer by playing the piano at the Sunday services. The Saturday evening attendees enjoy listening to Tony Lake twice a month with its style of contemporary music presented in an informal and friendly manner.

We are continuing to seek candidates to fill our organist/pianist position. In the interim we are lining up different individuals who can fill in as organists or pianists.

I want to call out Mary Nordeen, Betty Bishop and Nancy Fisher for the visits they are making to our homebound members. This team is exemplary in their commitment to providing a face-to-face meeting with our members who can't attend our services. We always need more help in this ministry area. Please consider what you can do to help this team out.

By the end of September, we expect to see some of our returning members who had ventured out of state for a few months and we welcome them back.

As you plan for upcoming events, please mark December 2, 2026 down for our Annual Congregational Meeting. A meal will be provided everyone prior to the business meeting.

Thank you for your support to Shepherd of the Desert.

God's peace to you,

Keith E. LaShier – Council President



According to the calendar it's finally Fall! Any day now the temperatures will catch up with that calendar and it's a darn good thing because, here at the Lutheran Thrift Shop, we're done with summer! Our snowbirds are returning – I think I heard it was snowing in Minnesota – and we're happy to see them!

Now is a great time to join the LTS nation! We are currently seeking people in all areas of the shop. However, cashiers, jewelry counter people, book department workers are an immediate need. Whatever your interest or talent, though, we have a place for you! Call us for a tour today and get a "behind the scenes look". We have 12 shifts every week so you can find a time that's right for you.

Right now, you'll be blown away by our huge selection of Halloween, Fall and Thanksgiving items in the Holiday House and, of course, our halls are **always** decked for Christmas!

Time to do some fall cleaning and get rid of stuff you don't use or need anymore? Now that the weather is cooler, maybe clean out those closets and the garage and discover extra space you didn't know you had? Bring it to the backdoor of the LTS on Tuesday or Thursday from 9-2 and help us help others. We will gladly pick up furniture from your pet-free, smoke-free home that's too big for you to handle. Our courteous truckers still come inside to pick up your things. Give us a call today to schedule a pick up.

Keep up with the LTS by following us on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/westvalleylutheranthriftshop/>

Or at our website: www.lutheranthrift.com

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FREE First Wednesday Bingo

First Wednesday of every month through November. Fellowship, food, bingo and Prizes. **September 2nd at 5 p.m.** in Walton Hall. Please make sure to sign up so we can plan for enough food. Thank you!



September 2026 Justa Center

Located at 1001 W Jefferson Street, Phoenix, the Justa Center provides life-sustaining recourses, services, and support to assist homeless seniors on their path to housing and supportive services to help prevent seniors entering homelessness.

Worship Attendance

	Sat.	Sun.	Visitor	You tube
August 1 & 2	24	43	3	30
August 8 & 9	32	35		24
August 15 & 16	16	46	4	39
August 22 & 23	27	43	3	30



Trunk or Treat is on the Calendar for Oct. 28th. We will start collecting candy for this event. You can donate candy or you can note "Candy" on you offering envelope.
This is a free event for the community.
Thank you for all you do to support it!



Mary Daniels	9/05	David Horstmeyer	9/18
Pat Zaborowski	9/07	Paulette Roth	9/21
Lisa LaCasse	9/09	Phyllis Cronk	9/24
Carol Wilson	9/10	LaDonna Jenner	9/25
Fran Woldt	9/12		
Allycia Thirkell	9/16		