

Shepherd of the Desert

Monthly Newsletter

August 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

jpmaroni17@gmail.com

Admin. Secretary: Kristen Wood

secretarysod1@gmail.com

Finance Secretary: Judy Yates

Jyates717@gmail.com

Church office Phone #

623-933-1359

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

"Let both of them grow together until the harvest..."

Matthew 13:24-43

If we compare God the farmer in the parables to the work of earthly farmers, we might conclude that farming is really not for God, or that God severely lacks the necessary skills! But the purpose of these parables isn't to provide lessons in agriculture. The purpose is to show how radically different the ways of God are from our own. When the Kingdom of God finally reaches completion, it will not look like anything a human creator would design.

Naturally, our human instinct is to grab the weedkiller. We want to tidy up the field and pull out anyone or anything we think doesn't belong. Jesus' own disciples tried to do this when they pushed away little children (*Matthew 19*) and tried to send away a crying Canaanite woman (*Matthew 15*).

When I was in college, I did yardwork and nearly gave a homeowner a heart attack by accidentally pulling up her prized flowers thinking they were weeds! If I can't even get it right in a garden, I certainly can't be trusted to judge who belongs in God's field. As the Lord reminded Samuel: *"Mortals look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart"* (1 Sam 16:7).

Here is the miracle of God's Kingdom: **in the natural world, a weed stays a weed—but in God's field, grace can turn a weed into wheat.**

God isn't worried about the weeds, and He hasn't called us to be the lawn care crew. Our job isn't to clear the field; it's to grow together, cheer each other on, and look for the image of God in everyone around us. Don't give up on anyone early—the Master Farmer is still at work.

Lord, give us the patience to share your field, the humility to lay down our judgment, and the eyes to see your image in everyone around us. Amen.

Blessings,
Pastor John

Ongoing August Activities

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

August 12th 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 August Paint Night.



Game Night

August 28th 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

August 29th 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 – August 2026

The Council will typically at mid-year reflect on how we are doing on numerous indicators and other factors. Our assessment reflects how we are managing our resources and how we are supporting our members.

We are doing well and our strength continues to come from our members.

Below is a sampling of some indicators the Council considers.

1. Financial Health:

- A. Our bank balances through the first six months of 2026 have remained consistent with how we ended 2025.
- B. Our offerings and special donations are slightly lower than last years first six months.
- C. The Facilities rental income for 2026 is likely to exceed \$60,000 and is a strong component of our financial health.

2. **APS Invoices:** Total expenses are slightly lower than last year through June. Our Sanctuary invoices are higher than last year, but the Walton Hall invoices are substantially lower based on our last years efforts to have APS classify it as a “Religious House of Worship”.

3. **Attendance at our weekend services:** We are averaging about 80 attendees this year at the weekend services. Saturday comprises 30% and Sunday 70% of the total attendance. Our attendance will begin to increase when our seasonal members return.

4. **Member Activities:** We provide many opportunities for our members to gather and connect with each other. We are seeing increased attendance at these gatherings which can include Game Night; Paint Night; Bingo; Wednesday Suppers; the Mid-Week Lenten Meals and Messages; monthly Pancake Breakfast. Also, the weekly Bible studies and Women’s Book Club.

5. **Weekly visits** are offered to homebound members who are provided prayer and communion. We have increased our home visits as more of our members have joined this small but powerful team.

6. **Music Ministry:** Our summer emphasis will be to find a replacement organist and choir director as we prepare for the fall season. We appreciate those individuals who have helped fill in during these summer months.

Thank you for your support to Shepherd of the Desert.

God’s peace to you,

Keith E. LaShier – Council President



Volunteering at the West Valley Lutheran Thrift Shop

We have over 350 volunteers who donate an average of 4 hours a week. The majority of them are members of various Lutheran churches in the Northwest Valley. Many other Christian denominations are represented and are encouraged to join our work force. We work hard and the pay is in knowing that others have benefited from our labors.

Volunteers are encouraged to work at least a three hour shift preferably once a week. The shifts are broken into AM (9:00 am to noon) and PM (noon to 3 pm).

Volunteer Work

The four areas where volunteers work are described as:

- Processors – work in the back room pricing donated housewares, hardware, clothing, crafts, books, shoes, purses, and art.
- Floor Workers – shelve items, organize and display items, assist customers and cover our security needs.
- Cashiers – work in pairs at the front counter to check out customers' purchases.
- Truckers – do the pick up and deliveries of furniture and other large items

To become a volunteer, use the information below to request an application.

EMAIL: lutheranthriftshop@gmail.com

PHONE: [623- 815 - 7061](tel:623-815-7061)

ADDRESS:
10615 W. Peoria Ave
Sun City, AZ 85351



FREE First Wednesday Bingo

First Wednesday of every month through November. Fellowship, food, bingo and Prizes. **August 5th at 5PM** in Walton Hall. We are having Pizza this Bingo Night! Please make sure to sign up so we can plan for enough food. Thank you!



August 2026 "Spirit Lift" Shuttle Bus

Keeping our bus running safely for our community comes with rising maintenance and operational costs. Your gifts to **Mission of the Month** this August help cover these expenses so we can keep the ministry rolling.

Worship Attendance

	Sat.	Sun.	Visitor	You tube
July 4 & 5	48	39	4	45
July 11 & 12	23	44	4	39
July 18 & 19	26	40	1	64
July 25 & 26	25	39	2	30



Do you need a Notary?
Call the church to set up an
appointment.

623-933-1359



David Christensen	8/18
Sherry Shenkman	8/21
Jay Matheson	8/25
John Nelson	8/26
Linda George	8/31

Rev. Bruce & Marylyn Ayers
8-17-1957
Chuck & Susan Johnson
8-31-1968