

Shepherd of the Desert

Monthly Newsletter

December 2025



Church Council

President: Keith LaShier

Treasurer: Nancy Hempy

Council Secretary: Nancy Fisher

Council Member: Jane Hansen

Council Member: Sheri Thirkell

Council Member: Kim Barnes-Blumberg

Mission Statement

"To be a congregation that puts the Love of Christ into action from 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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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**

The Journey from Advent to Christmas

Pastor John Maroni

Advent, derived from the Latin word "adventus," meaning "coming," invites us to prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christmas. The season of Advent is characterized by a somber tone, reminiscent of the long, dark nights of winter. Yet, within this waiting period lies a profound hope that leads us toward the light of Christmas.

Advent begins when the nights are longer than the days. We are reminded of the world's brokenness and the longing for redemption. As the weeks of Advent unfold, we witness a transition. The darkness of night begins to give way to the promise of dawn. Just as the days lengthen, so too does our anticipation grow.

The readings and prayers of Advent encourage us to reflect on our own lives, to recognize the areas where we seek healing and renewal. We are reminded that just as the world awaited the birth of Christ, we too are called to await the ways in which God will break into our lives.

By the time we reach Christmas, the atmosphere shifts dramatically. The birth of Jesus, the Light of the World, brings joy and celebration. The once somber nights are now filled with the warmth of love, family, and community. As we gather to celebrate, we are not just commemorating a historical event; we are participating in the ongoing story of God's love for humanity.

May our hearts be open, and may our spirits be lifted as we journey together toward the celebration of our Savior's birth. This year, our Christmas Eve Service is at 4:00 p.m. and Christmas Day Service is at 10:00 a.m. May the Lord gather us at Shepherd of the Desert.

December Happenings

Bible Study with Pastor John

Monday's at 10:00am. Bring your bible and a beverage. We are meet in the Conference Room. We are reading the lessons for the upcoming weekend services. No Bible study Dec. 29th.

Choir Rehearsals

Come and join Kevin DeYager, our Sunday Organist, as we rehearse choir music for the upcoming services. The rehearsals for **December** are Dec. 2, 9, 16, and 23rd in the Sanctuary at 2:00 p.m.

Pancake Breakfast

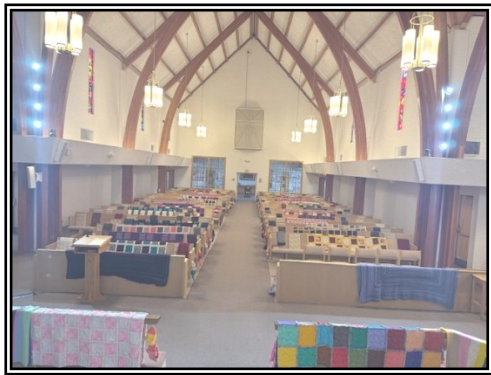
December 27th 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. in Walton Hall. The price is right FREE!!! This is a free breakfast for the community and S.O.D.

Paint Night

December 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 December Paint Night.



Council Presidents Message – December 2025



November has had some great services and opportunities for our members to participate in socializing and observing the talents and gifts of some of our members.

The weekend of November 22-23 was an opportunity to sample some great pies after the Saturday and Sunday services. The Saturday service was set up with tables in the Narthex and our members stayed to enjoy some fellowship and sampled a variety of pies. The members were in awe when they entered the Sanctuary to see the pews and altar were adorned with quilts, Afghans, and crocheted hats. There were over 560 individual items draped over the pews and hung on the altar rails.

On Sunday the members arriving were able to experience the visual display of home-made items that will be donated to various ministries. The members had to work before they enjoyed their feast of pies by helping to fold and assemble the vast number of items to be moved out of the Sanctuary as the service ended. The Sunday members were treated to many pies and take-home containers were available at both services to allow members to enjoy the pies at home.

A feast of great food will be served at the Annual Congregational Meeting that will be held in Walton Hall on December 3rd with the meal being served at 5:30 p.m. A ham dinner with a potato dish, green bean casserole and other accompaniments will be enjoyed by those attending this event.

The Annual Report for this Congregational Meeting is available and can be picked up in the Narthex. Please take a copy home with you and read the material. The Annual Report provides everyone a good summary of what is happening at Shepherd of the Desert Lutheran Church.

The Council and Staff wish to thank everyone for their support for SOD. We are thankful for your service and assistance throughout the year. For those who have not been able to volunteer and wish to do so please contact any Council member or staff person.

God's peace,

Keith E. LaShier



A Season of Gratitude at the Lutheran Thrift Shop

As we enter this holiday season, our hearts are full as we reflect on the many blessings God has poured out through the Lutheran Thrift Shop. What a joy it is to witness the generosity of our community, the dedication of our volunteers, and the friendships that have blossomed in this ministry.

We are especially grateful for the countless hours given by our faithful volunteers. Their smiles, patience, and commitment bring Christ's love to life each day. Through their service, our shop is not only a place of affordable treasures, but also a place of welcome, kindness, and hope.

We rejoice in the new friendships we've made along the way—each one a reminder of how God knits us together as the Body of Christ. At the same time, we pause to remember and grieve those beloved friends and volunteers who are no longer with us. Their legacy of service and love continues to inspire us and remains woven into the fabric of this ministry.

As a community of faith, we give thanks for the blessing of the Lutheran Thrift Shop. And we invite YOU to be part of this ministry! If you have ever wondered what volunteering might be like, we would love to show you around. Come take a tour of the shop, meet some of our dedicated volunteers, and see firsthand how your gifts and talents could make a difference.

Together, let us continue to serve with grateful hearts, lifting one another up in love, and shining God's light in all we do.

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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December Mission of the Month – Eve's Place

In December, special offerings designated "Mission of the Month" will go toward Eve's Place Community Services a Mobile Advocacy Program for victims for domestic, sexual and teen dating abuse, that provides services in various locations throughout Arizona, California, and New Mexico.



Worship Attendance

	Sat.	Sun.	Visitor
Nov. 1 & 2	24	49	2
Nov. 8 & 9	32	45	1
Nov. 15 & 16	21	51	
Nov. 22 & 23	31	42	2

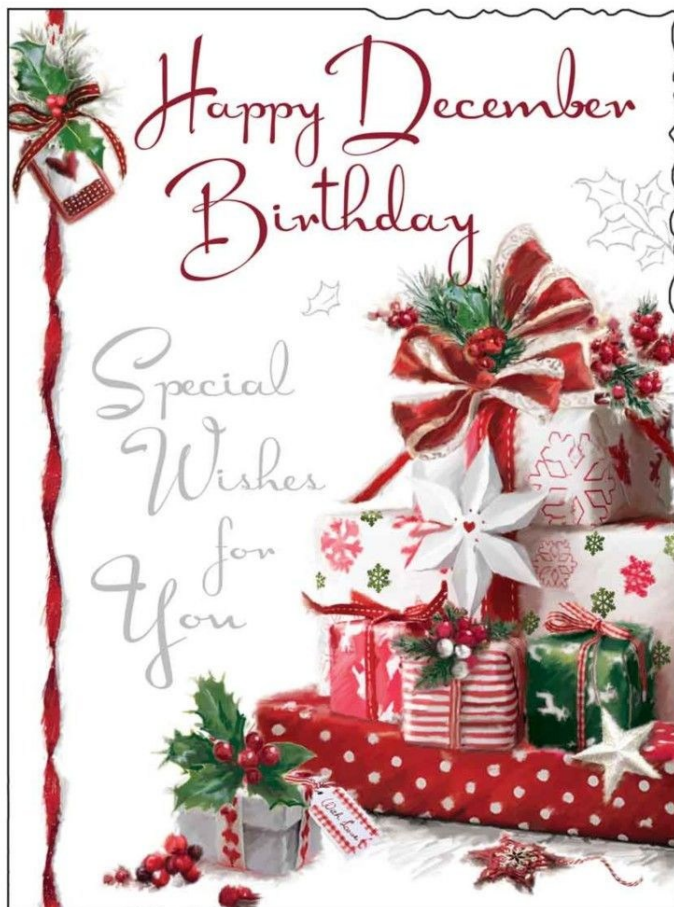
Save the Date

ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Wednesday December 3, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in Walton Hall.

Reports will be available to review Nov. 22 & 23.

We will have a meal at 5:30 p.m. followed by the Congregational Meeting.



Pastor Phil Gustafson	12/04
John Wallrath	12/08
Linda Jones	12/13
Pauline Cabalar	12/15
Gerald Dittmer	12/17
Rosalind Jones	12/22
Susan Launder	12/24
Darla Lohr	12/24
Paulette Thorson	12/31