



May 2025



Religion versus Cult?

Since Pastor Karen is on vacation, I volunteered to write the article for the May newsletter. Over the past few weeks, I attended the Growing Group's study on exploring different religions. Ann Hefner-Gravink did a wonderful job utilizing videos on Crash Course Religions. If you missed this series, I

highly recommend you check it out on YouTube. Here is the link.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=2RVSmLxyDpM>

Why It's Important to Learn About Other Religions

In an increasingly interconnected and globalized world, understanding different religions is more important than ever. Religion, for many people, is a cornerstone of identity, tradition, and worldview. It shapes cultures, influences politics, and guides moral decisions. Whether or not one is religious, learning about other faiths fosters empathy, enriches perspectives, and promotes peaceful coexistence.

One of the most compelling reasons to learn about other religions is to develop empathy and understanding. Religion is deeply personal and often tied to cultural heritage. By learning about what others believe and why, we begin to see the world through their eyes. This understanding reduces prejudice and helps break down harmful stereotypes that often arise from ignorance.

When we learn about the rituals, festivals, and beliefs of others, we humanize those who might otherwise seem different. Instead of seeing a veil, a prayer mat, or a statue as foreign or strange, we see symbols of meaning, devotion, and identity.

Many conflicts throughout history—and still today—have roots in religious misunderstanding or intolerance. By becoming more educated about different belief systems, we're less likely to fall into an "us vs. them" mentality. When people are informed and respectful of each other's beliefs, it's easier to find common ground and mutual respect. Besides it's interesting what you learn about different religions and cultures.

Learning about other religions broadens our thinking. It challenges us to reflect on our own beliefs and values, encouraging deeper personal growth. Even if we don't agree with another belief system, understanding it can add richness to our own perspective.

Learning about other religions isn't about converting or comparing—it's about connecting. It's about opening our minds and hearts and in doing so, we not only become more informed citizens but also more compassionate and understanding people. In a world often divided by difference, education about religion can be a powerful force for unity.

In these classes, I certainly learned a lot and it was very interesting. Our next class will be on Christianity. Perhaps you can join us!

June Johnson



We nurture our discipleship when we care for and celebrate one another.



Please pray for...

Our members:

Janet Benson, Ivonne Bradford, V-Anne Chernock, Kathy Doty,

Elsie Edgeman, Richard Ehman, Dakota Gravink, Gabby Hansen, Jim Hanser and family, Pamela Lyons, Robert McGee, Pat McKillips, Karen Mullin, Gerda Reid, Stu Reid, & Josephine Traugher.

Our homebound

Judith Eckhart and Shirley Quinn.

Those who are mourning

- The family of Robert Stetins (father-in-law of Pastor Karen) who died on 4/15/25.
- The family and loved ones of Pope Francis.
- The family of Jan Dushane (former member) who died on 4/23/25.
- Donna Graber (long-time member, choir member and director) who died in early April.

Our friends and loved ones

Kim Arnold, Bruce Atkinson, Zoe Barrett, Makita Bond, Adrian Butler, Diana Chalmers, Roxanne Costan, Curtis Deschaine, Dave Eubanks, Dave Frogget, Ed Goldberg, Rob Hakenen, Nicholas Hanson, Shaman Houpt, Craig Jimenez, Alice Kovarcik, Phil Ladiero, Rene Maddox, Mike Michaelsen, Helen Powell, Art Randall, Cheryl Rasmussen, Jo Reed, Eric Rigdon, Sharon Sanderson, Toni Scarrott Collins, Bob Stevenson, Rhonda Stokes, Tammy Stone, Nardos Tesfaye, Weldon Tunnell, Lorna Walter, Suzanne Wilson, Allen Yost, and Laurie Ziegler.

Bonnie Demuth's 100th Birthday:

She would love to receive cards for her birthday. Her address is:
201 Watermere Dr. #323, Southlake TX 76092



Members – New addresses

Judith Eckhart
Ivy Park at Rockville
4625 Mangels Blvd., #A205
Fairfield, CA 94534

Our homebound members:



Bonnie DeMuth
201 Watermere Dr. #323
Southlake TX 76092

Judith Eckhart
Ivy Park at Rockville
4625 Mangels Blvd. #A205,
Fairfield CA 94534

Shirley Quinn
11 Lemon Tree Circle
Vacaville CA 95687



May Birthdays

Maddie Sciortino

5/2

Michael Gravink

5/5

Sam Mullin 5/6

Bonnie Demuth 5/13 (100th)

Rene Bojorquez 5/18

Shirley Quinn 5/20

Larry Traugher 5/31



Easter Lilies 2025

Plants given to the
glory of God this Easter
Sunday were given by:

Dan & Fay DiSano

In memory of Scott DiSano and
their parents

Mike and Ann Hefner Gravink

In memory of Ad and Grace Hefner
and in honor of our children, Garret
& Dakota

Carl & Sarajane Hakenen

In memory of Edgar & Sylvia Samuels
and Art & Ruth Hakenen

Aura Hansen

In memory of Godon Hansen, Pedro
Majeja, Pedro Maneja Jr., Mamita
Santiago, Agustin Santiago, Mary
Aoldich, and Jim McLeod

Cheryl Hurd

In memory of Orv & Jo Oglesby and
Albert & Mildred Hurd

Les & June Johnsen

In memory of Bette Noll, Lew
Broschard, and Helen Bergoust. In
celebration of our grandchildren
Willa, Asher, Kylie, and new
grandbaby due the end of July.

Debi Kopmann

In memory of Mary Jane and Jerome
Starke

Tom Lingel

In memory of Jim Lingel and Joan
Stevenson

Bev Lipke

In celebration of her family

Patricia McKillips

In memory of Barry McKillips, Joyce
Copp, Paul Precour, Carol Fisher,
Michael Azevedo, and Barbara Cetko

Barbara & Marilyn Nelson

In memory of Larry Nelson

Pastor Karen Stetins

In memory of loved ones living the
resurrection life.

Josie Traugher

In celebration of Sonja Lord-Maclay
and Skaidrita Lord-Harvey

Donna Zaier

In memory of Jerry Zaier



We nurture our discipleship when we use our gifts to serve



Sabbatical Grant Proposal Submitted

On Tuesday, March 11, 2025 the Sabbatical Committee submitted its request for \$38,592 to the Lilly Clergy Renewal Program to cover Pastor Karen's costs and St. Mark's cost for a proposed sabbatical. The proposed dates are April 19, 2026 – July 18, 2026. The grant's receivers will be announced on August 29, 2025. Please keep the process in prayer as we await the outcome. For more details about the sabbatical, [please click here](#).



Council met on April 10, 2025. Here are some highlights of that meeting. The full minutes will be available once they have been approved at the May meeting.

Council Highlights

- Minutes of March meeting were approved.
- Approve Financial Report for March; Stew noted that March income/offering was similar to 2024; we had two members who submitted their entire 2025 pledges and a \$5,000 donation to the Food Pantry.
- Pastor discussed encouraging folks to participate in Spiritual Gifts inventory. We will see if there is interest.

- We discussed the alarm system quotes; table the discussion until Janelle was back in town to tell us more about it.
- The Congregation Retreat in March was well received. Stew Irwin will put a summary in the May newsletter.
- The new computer for projection slides in the Worship Center is ready to be set up with our current systems. It will be tested and used for the first time on Easter Sunday.
- The Social Media Audit report from It's Just Creative will be reviewed with the Social Media Team on April 16.
- We will celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Day on May 4.
- August 17 has been set for our semi-annual meeting.
- The Growing Together team requested we consider a special offering to pay for Pr. Eric Shafer's travel and lodging to lead a Sunday Connections. It was decided that we would see how the Zoom event went and host it in the sanctuary for more people to see.
- The Social Media consultants asked that we keep the initial Social Media team small and enlarge it as needed when (and if) we begin implementing their recommendations.



Picture: Foot Washing on Maundy Thursday.



Choir Rehearsals

The Chancel Choir rehearses every Tuesday from 11:30

a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and on Sunday mornings at 8:30 a.m. They sing during worship on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of each month and some special festivals. Join us as we make beautiful music to enhance our worship.



Thank you Sherwin Williams!

We are so grateful to the Sherwin Williams Store on West Texas Street! Last week they donated the paint for Keith Braselton to paint the west wall of the administrative building. Community support is so important to our ministry. Keith also donated his time to power wash that wall and paint it. We are truly blessed to be a part of this great community.

A BIG Thank You to Bob Jolley!



Bob has been working hard to fix our rolling gate....once again. You are so appreciated!



Some highlights from our preschool.

Mother's Day Teas are Thursday, May 8th and Friday, May 9th. Mom's please come to fireside room after you drop off your children for tea and treats. Your child will be singing some special songs for you and giving you a special gift @ approximately 9:15 am.

Teacher Appreciation week is Monday, May 5th to Friday, May 9th

Tuesday, May 20th and Wednesday, May 21st will be **the last days of school** this year and Thursday, May 23rd is "Kindergarten Bound" @ 9:30 am and preschools "Ice Cream Social" for all children and their parents @ 10:00 am. PLEASE NOTE: Doors will open at 10:00 am for the ice cream social.

Summer Camp We still have a spaces available for our June and July summer sessions.





Bible Readings – May 2025

May 4, 2025 – Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:1-20
 Psalm 30
 Revelation 5:11-14
 John 21:1-19

May 11, 2025 – Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 9:36-43
 Psalm 23
 Revelation 7:9-17
 John 10:22-30

May 18, 2025 – Fifth Sunday of Easter

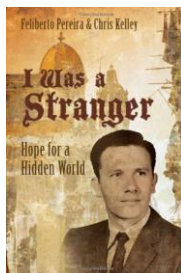
Acts 11:1-18
 Psalm 148
 Revelations 21:1-6
 John 13:31-35

May 25, 2025 – Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 16:9-15
 Psalm 67
 Revelations 21:10, 22—22:5
 John 14:23-29

Tuesday Book Study

We are reading “I Was a Stranger” by Feliberto Pereira & Chris Kelley. Everyone is welcome to join us in person or on Zoom at 10:30 each Tuesday morning.



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88381121677>

We nurture our discipleship when we worship and study together



Here's what's happening in May

5/4/25	Mental Health Month – NAMI speaker
5/11/25	Muffins for Moms
5/18/25	Crash Course or Speaker
5/25/25	Memorial Day Weekend

<https://solano-edu.zoom.us/j/81140367265>

Email Ann at drannhg@sbglobal.net for more information. Everyone is invited to join us and offer their ideas for events, classes, etc.

Wednesday Bible Study 6:30 p.m.

This is a great way to learn more about the scripture readings for the coming week. You'll talk about what they might have in common (or not!) and get a more in-depth understanding of the readings. Contact Jim Hanser (hanserjames@comcast.net) for more info.

Seeker's Circle

Thursday, May 8, 2025, 9:30 a.m.

Seekers Circle meet on Thursday, May 8, from 9:30am to 11:30 am in the Digerud Room. Carole Greeley is the Leader. All are invited to join in this lively discussion and discern projects to further engage in the local community and beyond. Contact Diane Metz at DLMetz6@gmail.com for more information.



We nurture our discipleship when we serve others



Feeding more and more people each week!

March 2025 Total Served 3,317
March families served 716

Total Volunteer Hours March 2025 477.5

Current Needs: Bags. The food pantry can always use bags.
Special Note: Distilled water is available at the food pantry to anyone in the congregation.

Quilters Continue to Meet on Wednesdays now in the Youth

Room: The quilters have officially moved into the Youth Room as of April 23, 2025. We have tables set up that can be left up until the quilts are completed. Contact Diane Metz for more details.



The Quilters were very excited to get moved into their new space (Youth Room). Photos from the move above.

Bread for the World's First 2025 Offering of Letters

Volunteers needed to manage the tables each Sunday in May to get people to write letters and send them to their local elected representatives. Contact the Social Justice Ministry Chairpersons: Diane Metz or Victor Romualdi.



Mondays and Wednesdays at noon (Digerud Room)



Senior Food Program
Location: St. Mark's Food Pantry
Dates: First and Third Wednesdays
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Telstar invites you to our 16th Annual Golf Tournament!

Telstar sponsors this event, and all proceeds go to Sacramento District Nazarene Missions International Youth Mission.

Saturday, May 17th, 2025
Rancho Solano Golf Course
3250 Rancho Solano Pkwy
Fairfield, CA 94534
4-person scramble tournament



Please review the attached flyer for more details and send all RSVPs to Janelle Powell: jpowell@telstarinc.com by May 2nd! [Click here for flyer.](#)

Fairfield News:

Click here for the latest local events: [Fairfield Weekly | Latest News | Fairfield, CA](#)
Playground Ribbon Cutting - May 12th at 3 pm at Allan Witt Park

May Events

National Day of Prayer - May 1st 12 pm in the City Hall Quad area



Fairfield Farmers Market begins on May 7th – every Thursday evening from 3-7pm at the corner of Texas & Jefferson Streets

MAYkers Market – May 10th, downtown Fairfield. This event will showcase downtown businesses and feature a vendor market pop-up with local artisans, crafts, baked goods and more.



This retreat is for all who proclaim the Good News—whether from the pulpit or through other forms of public ministry. Open to both lay and ordained leaders, it will explore how to listen deeply to oneself, the community, and God, ensuring proclamation is authentic, contextual, and community-centered.

Topics include:

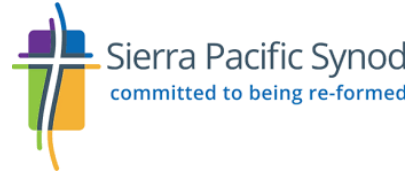
- Dependable Strengths & Saboteurs
- Community Organizing & Building
- Healthy Boundaries in Ministry
- Prophetic Proclamation

Christ the King Passionist Retreat Center, Citrus Heights

June 20 (evening) – June 22 (morning)

\$50 (With Scholarships Available)

[Register HERE](#)



SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2025

“Do Not Lose Heart” (2 Corinthians 4:16)

This is the theme for this year’s Synod Assembly. There is an opportunity for **all members** of the congregation to participate in a one-day **Regional On-site Gathering**. Pastor Karen and our voting members, Dan and Fay DiSano will be attending the May 17 event. These gatherings will be about learning and growing together. We will spend time in worship and conversation, enjoy a lunch together, and connect with one another as we journey together in faith. The cost is \$25 per person. Register at <https://onrealm.org/spselca/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=ZmQ1YmQ0YzltZDljMS00YjlxLTgwODctYjJhNDxMzI5NWUy>

May 17: WALNUT CREEK, St Matthews Church, 9:00 am -3:30 pm

WALNUT CREEK REGIONAL GATHERING **MAY 17**
 St. Matthew's Lutheran, 399 Wiget Ln, Walnut Creek, CA
 9:30 AM - 3:30 PM

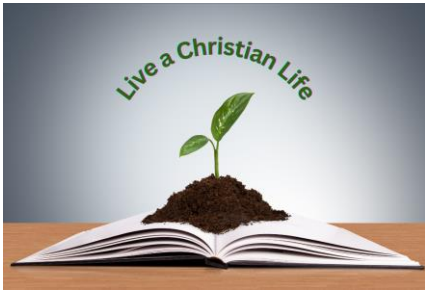
SYNOD BUSINESS SESSION ON ZOOM **JUNE 14**
 Your Home or Congregation
 9:30 AM - 12:30 PM

Synod Business Session on Zoom
Saturday, June 14, 2025
9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Congregational voting members are encouraged to participate in **ONE regional gathering** and the **online business session**. Regional gatherings are open to **everyone**, including non-voting members, providing a chance to connect, learn, and share in our ministry. However, please note that only **voting members** may attend the online business session. Mark your calendars and join us as we come together to discern and celebrate the mission of our Synod! More information is to come!

Lutheran Lobby Day May 28 in Sacramento

Join fellow Lutherans in Sacramento on May 28 for Lutheran Lobby Day—a powerful opportunity to raise our voices for justice and faithful advocacy! The event includes lunch. Register [HERE](https://lutheranpublicpolicyca.org/) or find out more at <https://lutheranpublicpolicyca.org/>



What's Happening at St. Mark's May 2025

Recurring Calendar of Events

Sunday

- 8:30 a.m. Choir Rehearsal
- 9:30 a.m. SMLC Worship (Worship Center/Live Streaming)
- 10:30 a.m. Fellowship (Worship Center)
- 10:45 a.m. Sunday Connections (Digerud/Zoom)
- 11:00 a.m. Pentecost Temple (Comm. Cen.)
- 2:30 p.m. Ministerios Ebenezer (Community Center)

Monday

- 12:00 p.m. Al-Anon Meeting (Digerud Room)

Tuesday

- 9:30 a.m. Preschool Chapel
- 10:30 a.m. Book Study (Zoom)
- 11:30 a.m. Choir Rehearsals
- 2:00 p.m. St. Mark's Food Pantry Distr.

Wednesday

- 9:30 a.m. Preschool Chapel
- 9:30 a.m. Solano Food Bank Senior Program (Food Pantry 1st & 3rd Wednesday)
- 12:00 p.m. Al-Anon (Digerud Room)
- 6:30 p.m. Bible Study

Thursday

- 5:30 p.m. Contemporary Music Team Rehearsal (Worship Center)

Friday

- 7:00 p.m. Ebenezer Mission (Community Center)

Additional Events

Thursday, May 1

- 7:00 p.m. Solano Symphony Strings

Sunday, May 4 – Volunteer Appreciation

Tuesday, May 6

- 5:30 p.m. Worship and Music Committee Mtg.

Thursday, May 8

- 9:30 a.m. Seeker's Circle
- 4:00 p.m. Council Meeting

Monday, May 12

- 11:30 a.m. Widow's Lunch at Mimi's Café

Tuesday, May 13

- 12:15 p.m. Preschool Board

Wednesday, May 14

- 5:30 p.m. Solano Symphony Board

Thursday, May 15

- 10:00 a.m. Capitol Valley Conference Mtg

Saturday, May 17

- 9:30 a.m. Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly

Tuesday, May 20

- Last day of T/TH preschool

Wednesday, May 21

- Last day of MWF preschool

Join us for worship every Sunday

9:30 a.m. for in person & live streaming service

on Facebook at www.facebook.com/SMLCFairfield (or click [HERE](#)) and on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@SMLCFairfield> (or click [HERE](#))

St. Mark's Mission: To Nurture Discipleship, Communicate the Gospel and Serve the Community.

St. Mark's Vision: To transform each church member into Christ-led disciples, nurtured and equipped by God's Word, whose purpose is to build up the Body of Christ in Solano County and the world.

St. Mark's Welcoming Statement: Adopted January 19, 2020

"We are St. Mark's Lutheran Church where everyone is welcomed and everyone is loved. We invite all into the grace, love and acceptance we have from God. We welcome YOU: who you are, as you are.



- All who are single, married, partnered, divorced, with or without children
- All sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions
- All racial, ethnic, and social backgrounds
- All who are homed or homeless
- All who are struggling with addictions or other personal hardships
- All ages and levels of physical and mental health and abilities
- All faith backgrounds, those questioning their faith and those new to faith

We invite you to fully participate in the life and ministry of St. Mark's Lutheran Church where we seek to share God's love and grace through word and action."

St. Mark's Lutheran Church



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

1600 Union Avenue, Fairfield, CA 94533

707-422-4741

office@stmarksfairfield.org; www.stmarksfairfield.org

Rev. Karen Stetins, Senior Pastor

Kim Worthen, Office Administrator

Semyon Lohss, Accompanist, Choral Director

Lucille Bowers, Preschool Director

Michelle Aas, SMLC's bookkeeper

Council Members

June Johnsen (President), Dan DiSano (Vice President), Jacqueline Marroli (Secretary),
Stew Irwin (Finance Chair), Toni McCallum and Josephine Traugber (Members at Large).

Elected Leaders

Linda Froggett (Financial Secretary), Les Johnsen (Treasurer)

Victor Romualdi, Personnel Committee Chairperson,