



January 2025 Newsletter

Sonora United Methodist Church



WORDS FROM PASTOR CAMPBELL

January marks the season of Epiphany. It is a time where our focus shifts toward the light. Star Wars borrows from the Christian faith with its light and dark side of the Force in it's sagas of Jedi and Sith. The wisemen or Magi followed the same star to Bethlehem that had earlier brought the shepherds to the manger. Light is a sign of God's presence and goes back to the Creation story. We have come to identify the light with righteousness, goodness and truth. As we seek to follow Jesus, don't we always see the light? The words of Kathleen Thomerson' song sum up this season for me:

I want to walk as a child of the light.

I want to follow Jesus.

God set the stars to give light to the world.

The star of my life is Jesus.

I want to see the brightness of God.

I want to look at Jesus.

Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path, and

Show me the way to the Father.

I'm looking for the coming of Christ.

I want to be with Jesus.

When we have run with patience the race,

We shall know the joy of Jesus.

Refrain:

In him there is no darkness at all.

The night and the day are both alike.

The Lamb is the light of the city of God.

Shine, in my heart, Lord Jesus.

We start a new season and a new year, and it is a time to reflect on what we want for our lives. I hope these words inspire your desire to walk with Jesus as a child of the light. I can't think of a better journey for us to start the new year together.

Shalom,

Pastor Kevin

Here are the scripture readings and sermon titles for January.

Jan 5: Epiphany

"Gathered to Follow the Light"

Matthew 2: 1-12

Jan 12: Baptism of the Lord

"God of the Seas"

Isaiah 43: 1-7

Luke 3: 15-17, 21-22

Jan 19: Human Relations Day

"Will Wonders Never Cease?"

John 2: 1-11

Special Sundays are set aside each year to deepen the connection between the local church and ministries on a global scale.

Individuals and congregations are encouraged to support the churches' collective efforts through an offering. We invite you to help continue to support the vital work of the Special Sundays.

United Methodist Churches traditionally observe Human Relations Day on the Sunday before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday. However, congregations are encouraged to celebrate on a date that best suits their schedule. Resources to help you celebrate and promote this Special Sunday are available [here](#).

The official date for celebrating Human Relations Day during the current quadrennial season are:

Jan 26: "As Was His Custom"

Luke 4: 14-21

Shalom, Pastor Kevin



**The Epiphany
Of the Lord**

WOMEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Greetings All and Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful Christmas and this coming year brings many rich blessings.

Cooking for Beans and Rice will be on Saturday the 25th at 9:00 am. Menu is to be decided and donation items will be announced.

There will be a potluck lunch after church on Sunday the 26th. We can hopefully discuss plans for this year. Please think about if we want to have regular meetings and how often. Also please think about what we may be able to do as a service project, community outreach, fundraiser or other activities. We are planning a rummage sale sometime this spring. Be watching for more details.

Let's be thinking about how we can be God's hands and feet in our little corner of the world.

Blessings,

Karla Wasson



WHO'S WHO IN THE PEWS?

January's featured parishioner is Janice Samuels Johnson. Enjoy getting acquainted with her.

I was born in 1943 during world War II .

As a young toddler, my father enlisted in the army which left me, my mother and older brother alone. Shortly afterwards she went to work making supplies for the government as many other mothers did. My brother and I were sent to my Grandmother who lived on Martha's Vineyard Island and she took care of

us while my mother worked. One of my earliest memories is watching Grandma wash dishes in what was called the "winter kitchen." My grandma was the most loving and kindest person I ever knew. She was a believer of God ,reading her devotionals and Bible while sitting in her favorite rocking chair. So many fond memories of her making homemade Cambridge tea and hot cocoa. She could also make a delicious meal out of leftovers and invite unexpected guests to her table.

When I started school I found it really difficult to keep up. Then around six years old, I had mumps, measles, and chicken pox ,one after the other ,which left me with severe ashmatic attacks throughout my youth. My doctor would make house calls or give me some special medication that was in the experimental stages to help me to breathe.

When I was well ,I would go to Catholic church , made my Holy Communion and went to Sunday school as regularly as possible. I knew God and I knew about Jesus.

I still had these attacks often missing school. It was advised, that we move away from the city pollution. We moved to the suburbs., but then I was extremely allergic to the trees, grasses hayflower etc., I therefore continued to be sick, but my new country doctor would immediately hospitalize me often with pneumonia which brought on the asthmatic attacks.

As time went on, I continued to be sick, but there were many miracles. I graduated from high school and went to nursing school for my LVN degree. After graduating, I worked in a hospital on the Pediatric floor. I wanted to become a foster parent and later went on to get my BA in sociology and minor in health and psychology.

I became a born -again Christian when I took my foster children to their Baptist church. I finally found out who Jesus is and accepted Him as my personal Savior in May of 1980.

You might be wondering how did I get from the East Coast to the West Coast?

Well, my son and I flew to the Bay area in 1989 before the earthquake of 1989. It was a horrible time to find a job and therefore I went back to nursing. My dad was right, you can always find a job in nursing, with benefits.

To make a long story short, a friend from church relocated in Tuolumne ,and invited me to visit her. I did , and fell in love with this little community. In 1999, I bought my first little home in Ponderosa Hills. I started working for Community Home Care where I took care of Sara M. who was a special needs child.

I knew I loved being a foster parent and got my license specializing in special needs children. This was my passion.

One day , a social worker called and asked if I would take a 10 week old baby who was severely delayed,would not be able to live a normal life, and probably wouldn't even live for a couple of months. She went on to say she was unable to find a foster home and therefore he would be institutionalized. I said ,"yes, I would take him."I fell in love with him and adopted him when he was about 1 year and 10 months old. He had many challenges but kept pushing forward with a joy to live.

In 2012, my friend Alice M . started BRJC with another person and I joined several weeks later. We fed the hungry at the Courthouse Park, including burritos, chips, a fruit and bottled water. Later in the fall, SUMC took us under their umbrella. We have been doing this ever since, except now we serve hot meals .

As most of you know, my son Jeremiah had thrived, learning to sit up ,walk with a walker, and go to school and church. One of his accomplishments was graduating from the high school special ed. department.

As I look back on his life and mine this was the greatest accomplishment. To be his Mama and to witness how God had allowed him to reach his full potential and I was honored to be a part of this achievement.

In 2023 God called him home. Although he is no longer with us , I remember how many people came to say goodbye in ICU and at his funeral .

His acceptance ,forgiveness and love for all is his testament. I personally do not know another one like him. His last year on earth was one of intense suffering and pain. I remember his last hours here at home, he asked me to pray with him as he folded his little hands asking the Lord to come into his heart.

So, here I am writing about Jeremiah.

I know one day we will be together again but right now God still has work for me to do. I am just patiently waiting to see what my next calling is.

OUR NEW CHOIR

December 24th , Christmas Eve Service was so special. It was the first time the choir sang after several months of practicing. Although this was not the first choir from SUMC, it was the first time since Covid. Lynn W. is a fantastic song director.

All of us were dressed in black and white and started from the back of the Sanctuary singing O COME ALL YE FAITHFUL when the Pianist Juliet S. and Violinist Bobbie C so beautifully played our cue to begin walking down the aisle.

The singers were, Ann W, Angie H, Loisi H, Lorraine V, Kathy M, and Janice S.J

They lifted their voices in unison and sang praises to God. The most loving comment someone shared was saying

"It was like the Holy Spirit was processing down the aisle before the singers. " That was so profound and touching.

We are always looking for others to join us. We usually meet every Sunday around 1:15 pm in the Sanctuary after church service and refreshments. Please contact Janice for further details. Wishing you a very happy and blessed New Year

BEANS AND RICE MINISTRY

Last week we had our Christmas dinner and give-away. The weather was raining off and on and a chill was in the air. Four of our regular volunteers were unable to attend. But God provided others to assist Alice M and myself to help with the most important and biggest event for BRJC of the year.

We served about 40 meals and 20 takeouts. Our meal consisted of ham, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, salad, rolls and vegetable

and cheese dips and pumpkin pie with whipped cream for dessert. Also, to the lady who donated 8 pumpkin pies for the following week – a BIG thank you.

We gave away lots of new socks, some hats, bags of candy and Christmas cards with a \$10.00 Wendy's gift certificate (29) tucked in the card.

When I think back on this event, I am so grateful to God and to Helen's Bible Study-Faithful Sisters, SUMC and all the people who donated money and items to help make this event successful. It really takes the whole community to come together.

Due to the inclement weather, I know a lot of people couldn't make it so we will give out more gift certificates and items this week.

Once again, thank you and Happy New Year to all.

Janice Samuels Johnson

Happy New Year! A LETTER FROM LORRAINE



With the new year, we have new officers in the church. At the Charge Conference on December 4, 2024. we voted on these changes:

On the Board of Trustees, Joshua Campbell will join Dan Townsend and Sally Bredehoeft. Joshua will take the place of Dave Wasson, who worked so hard on the Parsonage, when we were fixing that place up. He did a lot of

plumbing work and replaced the flooring in the dining room among other things.

On Staff-Parish, Loisi Hursky will serve with Roberta Clapham (chair person) and Nancy Fraleigh and taking the place of Angie Hursky Boswell.

Lynn Whitlach will become Church Treasurer. Peggy Florence will leave the job, but work with Lynn during a transition period. Peggy will take the position as our representative on the Interfaith Board, taking over from Ann Whitlach, who has served for years in that position. Roberta Clapham will become Finance Chair, taking over from Wendy Buckman. Dan-joe Lopez continues as Financial Secretary.

Lorraine Vogt will become Church Council Chairperson, taking over from Wendy Buckman. Many thanks to Wendy, who has served the church in so many ways for so many years, including negotiating with the Property Mgmt company with the Parsonage and with the Sonora Area Foundation with the Daniels fund.

Janice Samuels Johnson will become the ONE committee chairperson. and Karla Wasson will remain Women's Fellowship chairperson. Nancy Fraleigh will remain as Lay Leader and newsletter editor. Hope I didn't miss anyone. Thank you to everyone who works so hard for the church.

I am hoping to be with you on most 4th Sundays of each month in 2025 and plan to hold a Church Council meeting after church on those Sundays, to keep everyone up to date and to make new plans. If you have new ideas for the church, please bring them to our next meeting, which will be on Sunday, January 26, when we will hold a combined Finance Committee/Church Council meeting. Everyone is invited to attend and Committee chairpeople are especially asked to attend. This is the meeting to attend if you want to find out what is happening in our church.

Our renters in the Parsonage will be moving out on January 15th. Step - Up Property management company will be advertising for new renters. If you know anyone who would like to rent the Parsonage, please have them call (209) 532-7837.

Christmas week

I want to thank you for a blessed Christmas week experience for me. Pastor Kevin was still at Stanford on December 22nd with Jamie and so emailed his sermon to us. Peggy Florence, Bobbie Clapham, Janice Samuels Johnson and I quickly divided up the sermon and took turns reading it. Jim Nuzum was liturgist and created prayers in all the right places and then for the benediction recited the song "I believe". It moved me to tears.

After the service we had our annual White Elephant gift exchange party and potluck. The gifts were funny, the food was very good and the company of dear friends was wonderful.

On Christmas eve, we had 28 people attending the candlelight service. Our new choir, under the direction of Lynn Whitlach, lead the hymn singing and Bobbie, Angie, Janice and Peter Van Horton, from Soulsbyville church, and I had the opportunity to read the Bible verses that told the story of Jesus' birth. A beautiful service with friends and guests.

Then Christmas day, we had an impromptu potluck Christmas dinner, which began with decorating Christmas cookies, brought by my dear friend Melinda Wright. Thank you everyone for the lovely Christmas with my church family and friends.

Blessings,

Lorraine Vogt



From Hope & Healing International

A Prayer of New Beginnings

“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland” – Isaiah 43:18-19 (NIV)

Jesus, thank you for the gift of a new year – a fresh start. Give me faith to know that no matter what last year looked like, you’re still with me and you’re still for me. I thank you for the new thing you’re doing and the path you’ve set before me. Help me to walk with you in 2025.

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