

The Christian Visitor

FEBRUARY 2024 ~ VISTA LA MESA CHRISTIAN CHURCH

LENT BEGINS

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 14. Our theme for Lent this year is "Faithfulness in Fragile Times," which will take us on an exploration of the core values and practices of our faith that help us remain grounded when it seems that life and the world around us are shaky. We hope you will join us for worship throughout these six weeks leading up to Easter!

DRIVE-THRU ASHES

In place of a traditional service for Ash Wednesday this year, we will be holding an outreach event, offering the blessing of the ritual of ashes to our community. Pastor Rachel and others will be in the lower parking lot on Wednesday, February 14, from 3-6 PM, offering the ashes, along with a small blessing bag.

If you could help put the blessing bags together or help out that afternoon, please be in touch with Pastor Rachel. There are a variety of ways to assist with this event.

Disciples Class

We would love to have you join us for Disciples Class this spring! We meet in Bailey Hall and on Zoom each Sunday at 9 AM, to join in prayer and then work our way through the gospels, using study bibles and commentaries written from a variety of perspectives. This is a great way to deepen your relationship with scripture and your fellow VLMers.

Week of Compassion

We will be celebrating our denominational relief, refugee and development mission fund, Week of Compassion, on February 18 & 25, with a special worship emphasis and a special offering.

The Week of Compassion theme this year is "Gifts to Live On." It is rooted in the story of the widow who gave all she had, and encourages us to find life by offering our whole selves to God, through generosity and service.

Our goal is to raise at least \$500 for this special fund. You can give in worship or online at www.vlmcc.org. Coin boxes will be available on February and will be collected on the 25th.

Pastor's Half-Sabbatical

Pastor Rebecca is over-due for a three month sabbatical, but she and the Board agreed that taking three months away at this time would not have been prudent. In recognition of the toll of ministry over the past 6 years, the Board encouraged her suggestion to take a six-week "half-sabbatical" instead, with the option of using the other six weeks later in the year. She will be back on March 6. During this time, Rev. Rachel Cooley Shawler and Rev. Steve Bridwell will be covering pastoral duties. (See page 2 for more from them.) Please be in touch with them about any pastoral concerns you have during this time.

Interim Greetings

Dear Church,

We are in a season of Ordinary Time, yet with the light of Epiphany shining through. When does the light of Christ shine through your days? I heard recently from my UCC/DOC coach & mentor Sandra Summers a model of Spiritual Health which includes four elements needing tending each week: connection with yourself, with others, with nature, and with God. Of course, we may be splitting hairs here, as I believe the image of God is in each and every one of those places, and that you can find the Light of Christ within yourself too. Yet it is a helpful model to aid our Spiritual Health the way we might tend our Physical or Mental Health too.

Maybe you write a list of how you like to connect with each element and schedule them in across the week. Or perhaps you cut strips of paper for a jar & draw them when you feel low or at regular intervals for Spiritual Practice. Journaling, talking with friends, sitting in the sunshine, wondering at the flower, inviting God's presence in quiet prayer, meditating on scripture: all of these things remind us who we are and whose we are. They are our Spiritual Formation.

I'd love to hear your favorite practices, and share mine. Perhaps we can keep each other on track & inspire one another with stories of how God showed up even in surprising ways. I've come to see that God meets us where & how it most speaks to us individually, because God loves & knows us, and will always seek us out. May we be open, may we notice, so that we might delight in God as God delights in us. And may we share our stories with our VLM family.

thanks be to God,
Pastor Rachel

Pastor's Schedule

Pastor Rachel is available by phone & email, and is in the office Thursdays. She can also make visits & meet up for pastoral care. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

Steve's Stuff

Dear VLM,

Encouraging one another in the faith. It is a scriptural ideal that is rarely perfectly realized but, as with our attempts at New Year resolutions, we try and keep trying. To stop is unthinkable.

During the half century of my call to ministry I periodically discovered that I had lost that certain fervor that is required to keep on, to be faithful, to not give up. Never once did I have courage enough, or trust a congregation enough, to ask for time off. I just slogged through whatever discouragement there was hoping to make it to vacation time.

Pastor Rebecca has shown us a better way. She trusted us to be responsible with the tasks Christ gave - to encourage her faith and, in her absence, to continue to encourage faith in one another.

We have a rare opportunity to discover anew the Good News in the form Rev. Rachel Shawler knows. When Rachel leaves to encourage faith beyond our mission, I will be less retired to encourage more than ever the faith given you of Vista La Mesa.

So, I pledge to Rachel our support and encouragement. It is the least we can do. No! It is in everything we do!!

Sincerely,
Pastor Steve

Vista La Mesa Christian Church

*Celebrating the Unity and
Diversity of the Body of Christ!*

www.vlmcc.org

Helping with Interfaith Shelter

If you would be interested in providing a meal, donating food, or volunteering as an overnight host for the Interfaith Shelter rotation at Summit UU in Santee, please call Al Mork at 619-402-3737. They are hosting March 9-23 & need help.

Welcome Saturday

We really need to replenish our supply of thick plastic grocery bags before February 9.

If you have some you can bring in, please toss them into the front right corner of the Welcome Saturday storage room at the back of the Sanctuary.

We can also use warm men's clothing, bags/backpacks or luggage of any type, and blankets, if you have any to spare. If you'd like to volunteer, contact Pastor Rachel.

*A Memorial Luncheon will be held in Bailey Hall,
Saturday, February 24, 12:30-3:30 PM,
to celebrate the life of Angelo "Sonny" Cusumano.
Members of VLM who knew him are welcome!*

Novels Tea

Novels Tea will meet on Sunday, March 17, at 3 pm, on Zoom to discuss "Fresh Water for Flowers" by Valerie Perrin. Anyone who has read the book is welcome to join the group.

**Lunch Bunch
Wednesday, 2/17
Noon at El Torito
hosted by
Mary Alynn**

Cooking with Chef Claudette

Children are invited to join Chef Claudette Toland on Sunday, February 4, for another session of "liturgical cooking." We will be making strawberry-decorated cupcakes this month, to mark Candlemas, which is an old holiday commemorating the presentation of the Baby Jesus at the temple. All children are invited to participate (parents can stay in worship). Please let Pastor Rachel know if you're coming or not, so we can plan appropriately. (At right, Tennyson McCreanor and Adrian Morey helped make spice cake crowns for Three Kings Day in January!)

IN OUR PRAYERS...

Joy & Concerns ~ Please reach out to Pastor Rachel or Pastor Steve with joys and concerns.

Happy Birthday!

**Feb. ? ~ Brian McCreanor
Feb. 9 ~ Jason Sisneros, Sr.
Feb. 11 ~ Scott Tiemann
Feb. 13 ~ Sandy Hanna
Feb. 14 ~ RJ Lucchesi
Feb. 21 ~ Amy Cliffe
Feb. 22 ~ Jayden Tacon
(Sisneros)
Feb. 23 ~ Tim Cliffe
Feb. 25 ~ Beckie Neely**

Volunteer Roles for 2024

If you're looking for a way to deepen your spirituality through service, there are some volunteer roles we could use some help with going into 2024. We really need some more greeters for before worship and some more offering counters for after worship. We could use a couple more tech volunteers in worship, to help with AV and/or Zoom. Let Pastor Rachel or Karen Cliffe know if you're interested and we will make sure you are fully trained.

Church Camp Is Coming!

It's never too early to start planning for Church Camp at Loch Leven! Here are the dates for 2024:

CYF Camp – June 23-28 – For those entering 9-12 grades and recent HS grads.

Chi Rho Camp – July 7-12 – For those entering grades 6-8.

Junior Camp – July 21-26 – For those entering grades 4-5.

Mini Camp – July 21-24 – For those entering grades 1-3.

Wee Camp – July 21-24 – For kids age 3 through kindergarten attending with a parent/guardian.

You can find more information at www.disciplespswr.org/camp. VLM offers scholarship funds for our campers, as needed and available.



Blessing Pastor Tesa on her last day! (12/31/23)

News from the Board

The Board met on January 23, Pastor Rebecca's last official work before her half-sabbatical. Helene Sisneros gave a report explaining the work and history of the Memorial Endowment Committee. A motion was passed to update the list of people authorized to control the MEF. The Treasurer's Report was shared. As of the end of December, we have an operating deficit of just over \$4,500. This was much better than the deficit we were facing at the end of October – thanks to our generous and faithful donors! – but still not where we would like to be. The Board decided to hold off until March to see if a withdrawal from the MEF is needed.

The appointment of the 2024 Nominating Committee was postponed till March, given Pastor Rebecca's renewal leave.

Security Updates

Following our second break-in to the office this fall, the Board decided to invest in some upgraded security. New doors have been installed going into the office and the hallway from the playground. A new door was also installed in the attic.

In addition to the new doors, security cameras have been installed. We want everyone to be aware and comfortable with these cameras. The cameras cover the following areas: outside the office door, but not the playground area where children usually are; both office doors from the inside, but not the secretary's desk; the pastor's office, but this camera is obscured when the pastor is in; the area around the attic door including the HVAC units; the prayer garden including the main door of Bailey Hall and another from the west side; and the west patio gate from inside the patio. The cameras record when they detect movement, but the recordings are not kept in the system for very long. If you have questions, please see Karen Cliffe. She, Pastor Rebecca and other key leaders have access to the cameras through an app on their phones.

February 2024 Worship Participants

	February 4	February 11	February 18	February 25
Worship Leader	Tim Cliffe	Julie Germain	Mary Jane Fay	Michael Lewis
Lay Reader	Michelle Tolvo-Chan	Cheryl Davis-Plotts	Jennefer Lehton	Jerry Bailey
Offering Invitation	Rachel Cooley Shawler	Rachel Cooley Shawler	Michael Lewis	Rachel Cooley Shawler
Elders	Michael Lewis Ray Adsit	Marianna Kirwan Steve Bridwell	Tim Cliffe Cheryl Davis-Plotts	Cheryl Davis-Plotts Mary Jane Fay
Deacons	Mary Alynn Fallon Susan Peterson	Jennefer Lehton John Lehton	Jenny Angione Claudette Toland Lyn Van Winkle	Al Flores Daphne Flores Tracy Stockdall
Children's Ministries	Stephanie Cadiero Claudette Toland	Stephanie Cadiero & Volunteer	Stephanie Cadiero & Volunteer	Stephanie Cadiero & Volunteer
Comm Prep & Clean up	Tracy Stockdall	Tracy Stockdall	Daphne Flores	Daphne Flores
Greeters	John Lehton Michael Lewis	Daphne Flores Ray Adsit	Mary Jane Fay John Lehton	Ray Adsit Michael Lewis
AV Tech Zoom Tech	Mary Alynn Fallon Julie Germain	Jenny Angione Michaela Stockdall	Jenny Angione Julie Germain	Mary Alynn Fallon Michaela Stockdall
Counters	John Lehton Lyn Van Winkle	Jenny Angione Steve Bridwell	Tracy Stockdall John Lehton	Mary Alynn Fallon Andy Cliffe

Coffee Hour Hosts: (Jenny Angione, Claudette Toland, Lyn Van Winkle)

WHO AND WHERE WE ARE

We are a congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are part of the Christian Church in the Pacific Southwest Region.

We are located at 4210 Massachusetts Ave. (at Boulevard Dr.), one block South of University Ave. in La Mesa, conveniently situated between Interstate 8 (exit at 70th St.) and the 94 Freeway (exit at Massachusetts), and very near the #852 bus line.

Sundays: Bible Study @ 9:00 – Worship @ 10:30

Secretary's Hours: Tues/Thur/Fri 8:30-10:30 am

CHURCH STAFF

Ministers: **The Members of VLMCC**
 Senior Pastor: **Rev. Rebecca Littlejohn**
 Secretary.: **Krista Trimlett**
 Music Director: **Deborah Wilson**
 Nursery: **Stephanie Cadiero**
 Custodian: **Scott Tiemann**

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 Church website: www.vlmcc.org