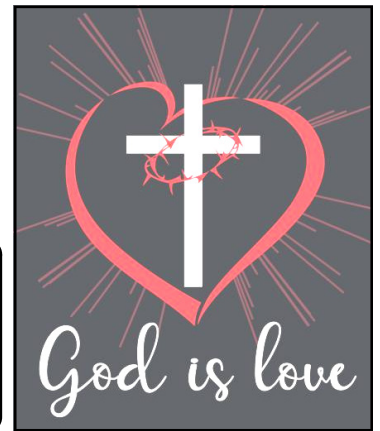




# February, 2022

## The Oakleaves



**SHERMAN OAKS LUTHERAN CHURCH** *The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

818-789-0215 • Fax: 818-789-037 • 14847 Dickens Street, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403

e-mail: [shermanoakslutheran@yahoo.com](mailto:shermanoakslutheran@yahoo.com) • [www.shermanoakslutheran.org](http://www.shermanoakslutheran.org)

### A great follow up field trip opportunity to Rev. Weinhold's visit from Food for the Poor

Located within *Children's Hunger Fund; Poverty Encounter* is a 16,000 square foot exhibit that takes you into four immersive environments in the developing world. After boarding an airplane and taking a simulated flight, you will visit a dump in Guatemala City, walk the earthquake-damaged streets in Haiti, go inside a brickyard in Nepal, and enter an underground sewer in Romania. Each environment highlights the story of a real child living in these circumstances. Onsite tours include a service activity, allowing you to respond Biblically by providing both help and hope to those in need.

#### Plan Your Visit

- Appropriate for all ages.
- Advance tickets are required; just \$7 a person for a group of 15 or more. Ages 5 and under are free.
- The experience includes a 75-minute guided tour of the Poverty Encounter exhibit and a 30-minute food packing activity (allow about 2 hrs).
- Please arrive 10-15 minutes prior to your tour start time.
- We recommend guests dress comfortably and wear closed-toe shoes.

Poverty Encounter is located at: 13931 Balboa Blvd. Sylmar, CA 91342 (818) 979-7090.

**Reach out to Chris Gordon if you are interested in going as a group and once we have 15 people, she will schedule a Saturday morning time for us to attend.**

### A limited-time Special Covid Safe Service Sunday at noon

In response to the latest surge of COVID, we have been in prayerful consideration about worship.

Across our congregation we are very unified in our desire to worship God, but very diverse in our comfort levels and health situations as it regards to COVID. Accordingly, we are going to *continue with* the Saturday 5pm and Sunday 10am services as they are, **while also adding an additional service at noon on Sunday which will have strong safety protocol in place.**

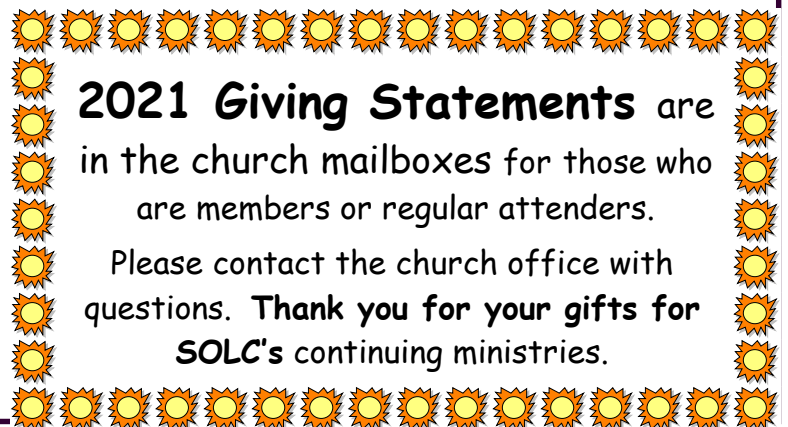
Communion will be done outside, as it was before.

### Learn! Grow! Worship!

**Calling all families and children!** Learn! Grow! Worship! **Sunday School** meets at **9 am every Sunday**, led by wonderful, dedicated, talented teachers.

We also offer **children's choir** led by Mrs. Rianne in preparation for singing during worship.

**Saturday School** continues to meet **after worship at 6 pm** with Mrs. Chris. Inspire and support the faith of your child for a small investment of time!



**2021 Giving Statements** are in the church mailboxes for those who are members or regular attenders.

Please contact the church office with questions. **Thank you for your gifts for SOLC's** continuing ministries.

## Mary & Martha Guild



by Evelyn Christel

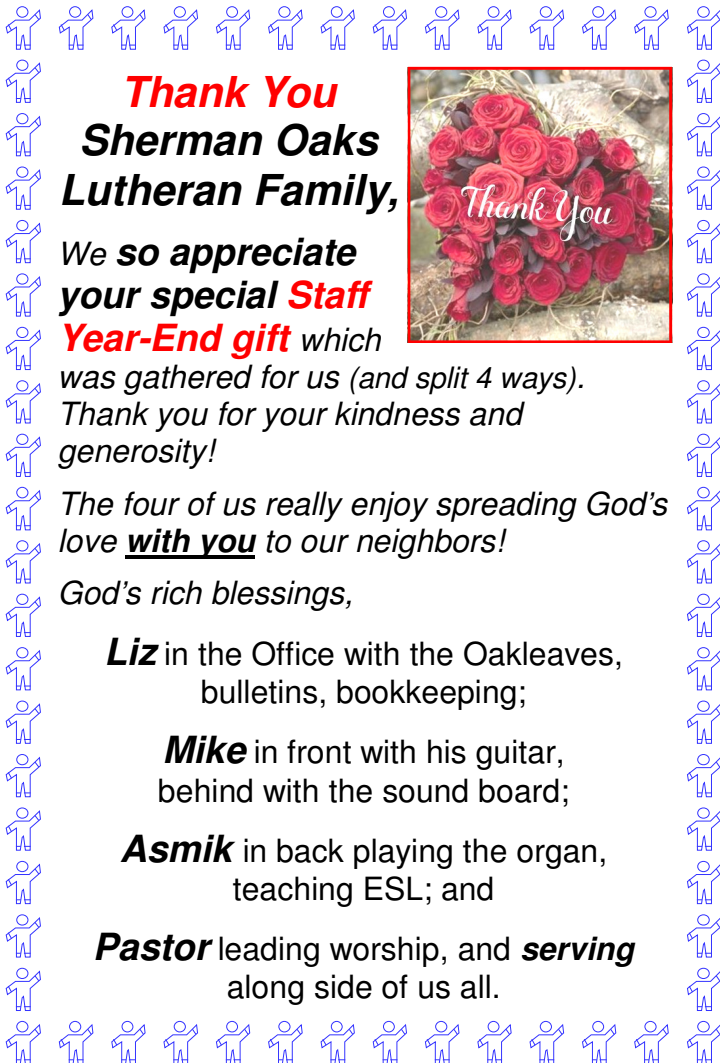
We had a very interesting service on Sunday, Jan. 23 with guest speaker, Pastor Robert Weinhold, retired LC-MS pastor, but still serving in many ways to help people in need.

He showed a film about the activities of **"Food for the Poor."** It has been in action for many years and our Mary & Martha Guild has made many donations to them. We have been limited in our giving recently, but with a little help from everyone we can send them a donation.

We would like to plan an information Mary & Martha Guild meeting soon. As soon as we secure the date we will let you know. By using some of the donations that have recently come in and a few dollars from each Mary & Martha Guild member we should be able to send a nice gift.

Another project I have mentioned briefly is the possibility of another **"cake sale"** for a special occasion. Looking through the calendar I thought the best time might be **Mother's Day on May 8.** That would give us plenty of time to prepare. I've checked around and will keep you posted if it seems like it will work.

Hopefully, each day we will continue to get better. Please continue to pray for everyone, especially to stay in good health. **Enjoy St. Valentine's Day.** Thanks be to God for all our blessings.



**Thank You**  
**Sherman Oaks**  
**Lutheran Family,**



We **so appreciate**  
**your special Staff**  
**Year-End gift** which  
was gathered for us (and split 4 ways).  
Thank you for your kindness and  
generosity!

The four of us really enjoy spreading God's  
love **with you** to our neighbors!

God's rich blessings,

**Liz** in the Office with the Oakleaves,  
bulletins, bookkeeping;

**Mike** in front with his guitar,  
behind with the sound board;

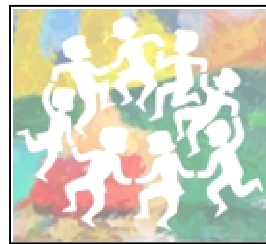
**Asmik** in back playing the organ,  
teaching ESL; and

**Pastor** leading worship, and **servng**  
along side of us all.

## Children's Center

by Diane Nixon, Director

The children will be busy this month making cards and gifts of love to celebrate Valentine's Day. Each class will have a snack party and time to hand out their valentine cards. They will learn about the tremendous love and grace God has for all God's children.



We will also be celebrating President's Day and praying for our leaders. The children will learn about our Presidents by the art and stories the teachers have chosen to read to their students.

February and March the teachers are very busy evaluating their students and meeting with the parents to review their child's development since the beginning of the school year.

We rejoice and are very thankful in the fact that we know you are praying for our children, their families and the staff. God continues to show us His mighty works daily.

# Stewardship

## God Is Love

by Andréa Vasilo

With Valentine's Day already upon us, the topic of love may be at the forefront of our minds this month. The Bible teaches us that God is love, and that God's children crave love from the very beginning of our lives. Scripture actually examines four types of love; in Greek, they are known as *Eros*, *Storge*, *Philia* and *Agape*.

**Eros** (pronounced AIR-ohs) is sensual or romantic love, derived from the mythological Greek god of love, Eros – also known as Cupid. In the Bible, God commands that this type of love be reserved for marriage: "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (Hebrews 13:4)

**Storge** (pronounced STOR-gay) describes family love – that affectionate bond among parents, children and siblings. An example of this in the Bible would be the love that sisters Mary and Martha felt for their brother Lazarus. As Christians, we are members of God's family, knit together by the Holy Spirit rather than physical ties.



**Philia** (pronounced FILL-ee-uh) is the love present in close friendships, also known as "brotherly love." In Scripture, *philia* encompasses respect and compassion for our fellow humans, especially those in need. Jesus taught that it would be an identifier of his followers: "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:35)

**Agape** (pronounced uh-GAH-pay) is the highest of the four types of love in the Bible: God's incomparable, immeasurable, unconditional love for humankind. It is divine, sacrificial and perfect. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

As God's stewards here on Earth, we should honor *agape* by practicing *eros*, *storge*, and *philia* in the way that God's Word encourages us to do.

Don't forget: if you are not yet comfortable attending in-person worship services, you can still support SOLC by mailing offerings to the church, downloading the Vanco app, Tithe.ly app, online "bill pay" through your bank, or giving online... [www.shermanoakslutheran.org](http://www.shermanoakslutheran.org).



### Youth Group News...

#### 2022 LCMS National Youth Gathering - In all Things

July 9 - 13, 2022 in Houston, TX

Check it out at: <https://lcmsgathering.com>

Thanks for your support in previous fund-raisers. There will be many more coming up!

If you would like to spearhead a fundraising event or just have a good idea for one, please let Chris Gordon or the Hinrichs know.



Check out our church website under "online giving" to the icon "GIVE to SOLC," click on it, thus giving through Vanco. The best thing about this is, Vanco directly sends the report into Servant Keeper, which is our database and where the yearly giving statements are generated!

As we incorporate Vanco into our weekly routine we will start using the many functions that Vanco offers to congregations.



Join us in wishing God's blessings on those celebrating their birthday or anniversary this month:



### Birthdays:

		Inga Windsor	2/18
SyVIA Bailey	2/6	Dennis Werner	2/20
Larry Hanna	2/7	Becky Groth	2/23

### Anniversary:

(Congratulations on number of years!)

Liz & Mark Rickertsen (32 yrs) 2/24

## Called to *Serve Thank You!*

by Breilyn Brantley

*"But thanks be to God! God gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:57*

Let's **give thanks** to those who have given their time and talents here at SOLC in **January, to:**

- ☺ Pastor and all who help set up the 12:00 pm (noon) Sunday services so people can feel safe during this pandemic.
- ☺ the lovely teachers doing Saturday and Sunday School for our children.
- ☺ those who volunteer their time to help with all the goings on at the church.

*If there are anyone out there you feel deserves thanks for giving their time and talents to the church, please email me at brei04@hotmail.com.*

## Mercy Packs

by Chris Gordon

We will be working with Central Lutheran to distribute Mercy Packs.

Their pastor shared that they also serve between 300 and 350 families a month, who are housed but in need of groceries.

If you would like to donate non-perishable, boxed or canned food; just place items in the red bin in the Fellowship and we will take items over once a month.

**NEED: Protein in pull top cans; socks; lotion; sunscreen...**

### Items Needed for the Mercy Packs:

- Cases of water (small bottles) or juice bags
- toothpaste (travel size) & toothbrushes
- adult socks & gloves**
- cups of fruit or apple sauce
- fruit bars & granola bars
- pull tops: tuna fish, packets of tuna, spam or Spagettios, cookies**
- peanut butter (or plain) cracker packs
- spoons, forks & napkins
- zip-lock 1-gallon bags
- hygiene items: body wash, deodorant, **lotion**, small bars of soap, **sunscreen (smaller size)**
- shampoo, conditioners, women's menstrual products and small brushes and combs.

## SOLC's new Street Evangelism project!

by Alan Cohen

We are planning a new ministry. We will train, do run-throughs, have discussion, and activities so everyone will feel as comfortable as possible to participate in this exciting ministry! The most important thing is your participation and support, just your being with us is enough!

This is a very rewarding way to express your faith, invite people to our church, and help others profoundly. All you need to do to witness is to stand with us and our sidewalk sign, pass out a pamphlet when needed, and possibly a few words of greeting from you is a great start!

If you are interested in being contacted about scheduling or future meetings, feel free to email your contact information the church office. Hope to see or hear from you soon! God bless.



# Church Council highlights ~ January 18, 2022 mtg

by Council Secretary Ann McClung

◆ **Pastor's Report:** Pastor Utecht is looking at our Mission Statement to determine if it still holds true as when it was developed. He wants it to be more of a sentence, or statement, but loves the message. He would like to know more of the origin history. There was discussion and approval to extend the trial period of the Sunday School time change while keeping children in the church service. The council would like more data and input before a final decision is made. There will be an **informal meeting** with Pastor after church on **Sun. Feb. 13** for any members who would like to share their feelings. There was a motion to firmly **not allow food or drink in the sanctuary.**

◆ **Financial Secretary's Report:** Heather Wolter reported that the December General Fund total was \$20,028.27. We collected \$1813 for staff year-end bonuses. The contributions (fiscal year) through December were \$108,132.76 which is up nearly 16% from last year. Leslie will have the Financial Institution Report and Profit and Loss Statements updated next month.

◆ **Outreach Committee Report:** Rhonda Reneker expressed thanks to those who made the Living Nativity event a blessing. The spotlight was missed, and will hopefully be added next year. There will be discussions about whether to make it a walk-through rather than drive-through event in the future. The Christmas Concert which was very well done, had about 200 views. Opportunities to engage in street ministry will be offered to our congregation thanks to newer member Alan Cohen, who will have an informational meeting for those interested on Sat., Jan. 22. The committee is renewing its efforts to advertise the Preschool. There was a discussion on some options to update our current corner sign. Due to city zoning restrictions, the desire to install a digital sign is not looking good. No decisions have been made yet, but the Trustees will get involved with possible changes to the existing sign.

◆ **Christian Education Report:** Cindy Hanna suggests speaking directly to families who have young children, to evaluate the best way to go forward on Sunday School times. Attendance at the 9:00 a.m. Sunday School has been low.

◆ **Men's Group Report:** There were no meetings over the holidays, but Jamie will put together a trip to the Car Museum and a visit to his garage of racing cars in Carpinteria for the men in February.

◆ **Trustee Report:** Larry Hanna reported fixing the AC/heating problem. Also, the Prayer Garden fountain motor and women's restroom toilet were replaced. Dustin Lee will revamp the Memorial Garden as part of his Eagle Scout project.

◆ **School Board Report:** Dorene Rubin reviewed the Covid protocols in place at the school. School tours are only given after the school day. All furloughed teachers have been hired back. 8 new students will be added by February.

**Please NOTE:**  
**Food and drink is not allowed in the Sanctuary!**

The Board is beginning the budget review process and will consider a tuition increase. A graduating family gave a donation of an extra curricular science program for the rest of the school year. Pastor will meet with all the teachers individually to get to know them better.

◆ **Elder's Report:** Luigi Uwanawich reported the elders continue to pray for the health of the congregation and its members. Luigi reported the Saturday service attendance is down considerably. The Sunday "extra Covid-safe service" (the first one held on Sunday, Jan. 16) had about 10 people attend. Overall, the 3 services are available to allow safe, meaningful worship experiences.

◆ **Vice President's Report:** Eric Anderson is seeking to add more ushers. It was discussed that women are welcome to serve in this way, as well as, older youth and young adults. Anyone interested should contact Eric Anderson.

◆ **President's Report:** David Seaver stated the church leaders will meet in March to discuss a variety of issues and challenges of the church. It will be a good time for the leaders, along with Pastor Utecht, to bond in their commitment to the health of the church as it moves forward. There was discussion about providing the KN95 masks for church employees and those who attend the noon service. Sat. & Sun., Jan 22-23, *Food for the Poor*, will send a guest speaker.

## A Message from Pastor...

by Pastor Titus A. Utecht

# Growing in the Image of Christ

Dear Christian,

You have a powerful destiny and a higher calling. You were chosen to be someone special, and to live a life that is not easy, though it is great. Your calling is this: **Those whom [God] foreknew he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son.** (Romans 8:29) You are to be conformed to the image of Christ. To live as Jesus did, to love like Jesus did, to forgive as he did, and even to die as Jesus did. The shape, form, and pattern of your life and actions is to look like Jesus. Jesus himself said as much, when he declared **"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."** (Matthew 16:24) Just as Jesus was all about showing sacrificial love, demonstrating that for us by dying on the cross, so too do we bear the cross of sacrificial love in our everyday lives. To be a Christian means that our life should look like Christ's.

This certainly is a great and high calling! As you read about it, perhaps you feel a bit convicted. "My life isn't really all that Christ-like." Indeed, if you have any sense of just how lovingly and sacrificially Jesus lived and how perfectly he fulfilled the Father's will, you should immediately recognize that there is much in your life that needs to be transformed. First of all, realize that these failures don't make you any less of a Christian. God has called you and put the name of Christ on you, and Christ's blood forgives all these faults. So don't abandon your calling to follow Christ because you cannot do it perfectly. Instead, grow in it. Scripture repeatedly affirms that no matter where we are at, **"we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ."** (Ephesians 4:15) Peter says it this way: **"Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up in salvation—if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is**

**good."** (1 Peter 2:2-3) Even those who are well established and doing much in the faith are called to grow. Paul tells the Thessalonians **"Now concerning brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write to you... for that indeed is what you are doing to all the brothers throughout Macedonia.** [That is, they are doing great at showing Christ-like love!] **But we urge you, brothers, to excel even more."** (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10) Fulfilling our calling to be conformed to the image of Christ isn't a one and done transformation, it is a life-long process.



So what does that process look like? How are we conformed to Christ's image? It happens only through close connection to Jesus and his Word. Jesus says, **"I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing."** (John 15:5) Stay connected to Jesus, and just like a vine grows branches and yields grapes, so too will you grow in Christ's image and in faith and love. So stay connected to Jesus through prayer and careful

listening to God's Word. Spend quality time with Him at the church service, receiving His forgiveness and teaching, and declaring His praise. Receive there His very body given for you, that you might be conformed to that same body. Receive His life-blood, that your life might reflect His. And then bear the fruit, and so fulfill your calling to be conformed to Christ's image. Show the love of Christ in your life. As Paul says, **"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice."** (Philippians 4:9) Whatever is on your mind that you've been thinking "You know, this would be a very Christian thing to do," go do it!

My prayer for you, wherever you are in your faith walk, is that you would continue to grow. May you be connected to Christ and growing and increasing in how your life reflects Jesus.

-Pastor Utecht