



A bimonthly publication of Good Shepherd Catholic Church ~ steadfast in awakening our true being in God.

Arise! Shine, for your light has come, the GLORY of the LORD has dawned upon you. Isaiah 60:1

NEW 5-YEAR SPIRITUAL PLAN GUIDES US TO SERVE AS LIVING LIGHTS... BEACONS OF LIGHT

One of the most beautiful aspects of the Catholic Church lies in its perpetual motion. Its liturgical calendar keeps the Body of Christ focused on Christian mystery, always presenting and re-presenting seasons, figures and feasts, helping us to grow in faith and love of Jesus. And with every passing cycle, progress urges gain in spiritual maturity.

The same can be said of uniquely sacred times in the Catholic Church, such as the recent Jubilee year. The "pilgrims of hope" theme offered a rich overlay of meaning to the faith journey.

It easily brings to mind the three wise men – *the magi* – who journeyed with great hope, following a star, that they might find the newborn King, the Messiah.

"Guide us to thy perfect light," as the song lyrics go. Their story evokes a prayerful plea from the heart of every Christian on Epiphany and beyond. *Lord, guide me, too! Help me to shine!*

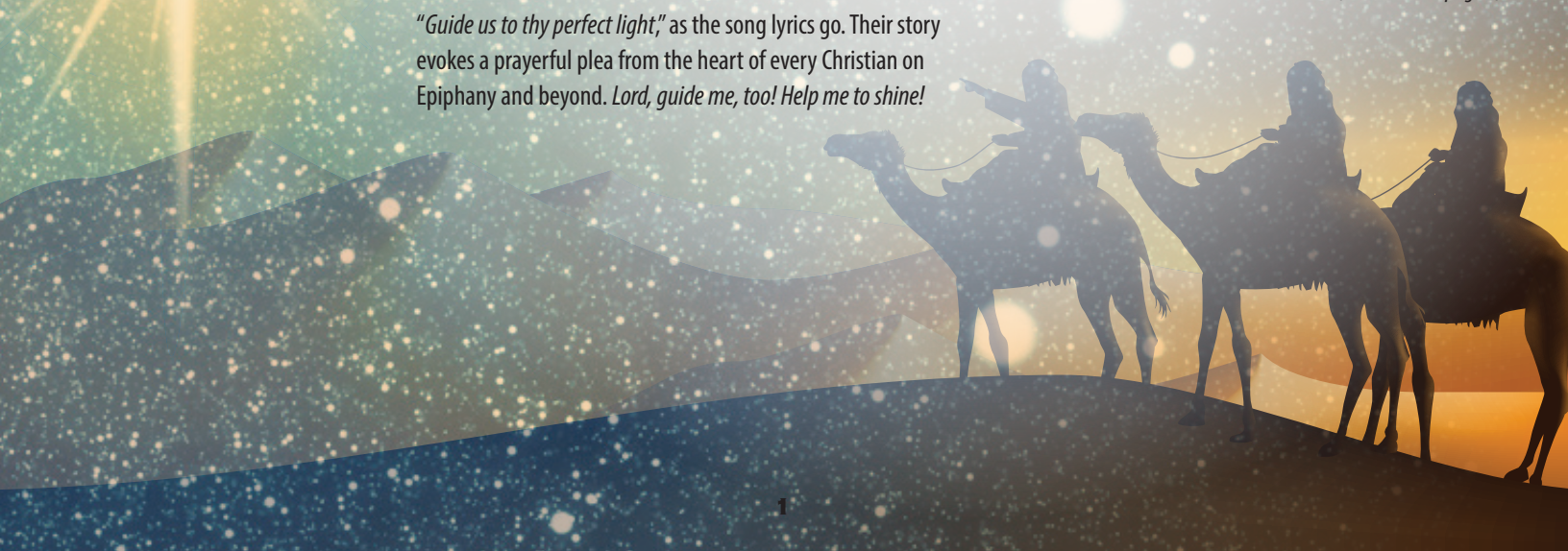
From Jubilee to Glory!

On the Feast of the Epiphany, as Pope Leo XIV closes and seals the Holy Doors at St. Peter's Basilica for another 25 years, God's providence and perfect timing swirl about us. We stand in awe and sense our own "mini epiphanies" and spiritual inspirations.

The Jubilee Year and all its graces – *forgiveness, renewal and hope* – hold a special and illuminating message.

"...the Glory of the Lord has dawned upon you." That is, Christ's Light has dawned upon you. "Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall throb and overflow." (60:5)

(Continues on page 4)



Practice the faith...

Awaken THE SOUL

Sam Harmon and Shane Galvan

Stewards of light as they care for our parish and school campus

The sheer volume of people coming and going daily to Good Shepherd Catholic Church facilities and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School (SEAS) puts the campus's holy traffic on par with the busiest of public centers. Hundreds of students, staff and teachers scurry through the gates of learning for daily academic nourishment and faith formation. Hundreds upon hundreds of adults come, too, for morning Mass, ministry and meetings. On any given weekend, several thousand faithful souls come through the doors to worship and serve.

Who ensures everything is clean, stocked, and welcoming? Who steps in to maintain these places and spaces when light bulbs burn out, something needs repair, or trash receptacles overflow?

Enter Sam Harmon and Shane Galvan, the school and parish's resident maintenance men with bright smiles, warm words and great attitudes.

"Overall, I enjoy it," Sam says of his maintenance work for SEAS. "I enjoy working with my hands and I like things being tidied up," the Elk Grove native assures, referring to his work as "super-fulfilling."

A few years ago, he saw the ad in the parish bulletin, applied and by "divine intervention," he secured the job. On-site early in the morning, Monday through Friday, Sam handles a range of tasks primarily for SEAS but with natural overlap in serving the entire Good Shepherd campus.

"I execute work to the best of my ability," Sam acknowledges, wise to the fact that every day is different, brimming with new challenges to fix, clean or repair. His pleasant, welcoming nature witnesses to Christ as he holds doors open with a smile and children parade into the narthex. Or when he sets out driveway cones to

manage after-school traffic flow, waving to parents and exuding calm control.

Shane focuses on church grounds and buildings and shares a "get it done" philosophy with Sam, which makes these two young men "house favorites" and surely saintly stewards of light as they tackle sometimes very unbecoming work.

"I like it, it's honest work," Shane affirms, also indicating that he can often be "thrown into things" (like assembling the new welcome center desk in the narthex) and on-call in the event of emergencies.

Shane attended St. Charles Parish in Livermore and first came to Elk Grove to work for The Grove Youth Ministry.

"My pastor there used to say I had been 'sent' to work here," Shane mentions, pointing to that turning point pillar of missionary discipleship — to SEND every disciple out to carry on the mission of Jesus. But after shifts occurred in the nature and structure of The Grove, Shane's job was eliminated. Out of work, he asked the parish business manager whether any other jobs were open, thus beginning his new role in maintenance.

Sam and Shane concur, working as colleagues amid maintenance demands makes their responsibilities more pleasant. Cleaning restrooms, stocking paper goods, and responding to occasionally impolite or impatient people can be taxing.

"There are people who are really kind, though, and that offsets any frustrations," Shane admits.

Sharing about the most appealing part of their work both refer to the quiet of the church. Late at night, closing down and turning off the lights, the setting "anchors" Shane.

"I like the candlelight. I see the tabernacle," Shane says.

"Same," Sam echoes, commenting on his early morning hours, opening up. "I really feel the presence," he adds, sensing Jesus dwelling in the church and in his heart. "I've really come to appreciate that time."

"I like to think of this work as 'support' work," Shane concludes, drawing a connection to how maintenance work is about "maintaining dignity." He describes how ministry workers, clergy and the faithful need the comfort of knowing facilities are clean and in order.

"Maybe it has been a long night of reconciliation, or an emotional spiritual experience," Shane imparts, signaling that the last thing someone wants would be unkempt facilities. "It's like when Jesus washed the feet of the apostles," he explains, drawing a parallel to Jesus' humility to clean the soles (and souls) of others.

"Every moment is an opportunity for learning and growth," Sam submits. ✚





Aspiring for Heaven

Diane & Matt Marcotte turn to several saints as they strive for heaven

Relating to a particular saint is often very personal and uniquely tied to an individual's story. For Diane and Matt Marcotte, the same holds true as they recognize that their journey as spouses means supporting the other in their holy devotions – *recognizing, listening and appreciating one another's saintly connections.*

"Everyone in heaven is a saint," Diane says, echoing the Catechism of the Catholic Church (948) and pointing to our time on earth as a time when *"you are aspiring to get to heaven."* This comes to her mind every time she hears the phrase, "we're all called to be saints."

The exact phrase also stirs Matt to consider saints as role models and protectors. "We turn to saints because they are an image of one guided by Jesus," Matt reflects.

Diane's role as the parish's communications and development coordinator explains her attraction to **St. Therese of Lisieux.**

"I think of her and her quote about doing small things with great love," Diane shares, hinting that life and work can be overwhelming, "but you can always do small things and make a difference."

Like St. Therese, Diane tries to remember "the little things" in everyday life...kind words, and small gestures like "sending a card, making a meal, listening" in times of need.

Still, growing up with solid familial ties to her Portuguese heritage, Diane reveres **Mary, the Mother of God**, as her source of strength and inspiration.

"We always prayed to Mary while I was growing up," Diane says of the long-standing practice that continues today.



"Now, let's help each other get to heaven,"

Blessed Charles of Austria told his wife, Zita, on their wedding day in 1911. Diane and Matt might be a modern-day version of Charles and Zita! They live out their vows with hearts set on helping each other get to heaven.

Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of the saints in heaven, our brothers and sisters who now live your glory. I ask my patron saints and all the saints to intercede for me and my family, to help us journey safely to you, overcome temptation, and live holy lives. Protect us from evil and guide us to eternal life. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

men's fraternal service organization.

"Blessed McGivney illustrates well the Knight's

approach to everything, and that is to put people first," Matt conveys, indicating it is an attitude he tries to imitate in his life, greatly influenced by his 21-year membership in the Knights and his "4th degree" status.

St. Joseph is another spiritual powerhouse to Matt.

"He is a big figure to me because of who he is and what he represents," Matt shares, referring to his fatherhood to Jesus and his patronage as "Father of the universal church," but also his quiet strength, protection and humility as husband to Mary. With Diane's encouragement, Matt turned to the Novena to St. Joseph the Worker before landing his job with the Knights of Columbus.

"Especially as a mother," she says that she relates to Mary's story – her grace, fortitude and faith.

"Mary raised Jesus in the middle of meager circumstances. When I think of what she endured, it puts everything into perspective for me," Diane assures, motivated to "bear" any burdens with a grateful heart, keeping Mary top-of-mind as she prays for her intercession.

Matt lists several saints whose lives seem woven into his like golden fibers tying everything together. Employed by the national office of the Knights of Columbus as a governance risk and compliance specialist, Matt's natural inclination is to turn to **Blessed Father Michael McGivney**, founder and patron of the

Matt rounds out his list with two more giants – **St. Francis of Assisi and St. Michael the Archangel.**

"St. Francis always was a big presence in my life," Matt recalls, reminiscing about his youth and the songs and prayers that point to this patron of the "environment" and advocate of peace. Matt refers to St. Francis' writings and the origin of the famous albeit transmuted quote, "preach the Gospel at all times, use words if necessary."

St. Michael signals leadership for Matt, who simply states he "leads by example." St. Michael evokes powerful imagery as a protector against evil, guarding the Church and providing spiritual defense.

Striving for heaven with this cadre of saints gives Diane and Matt what they need to step forward in faith every day, reminded to love and serve by the saints they hold dear. Married for nearly 25 years with two daughters, both "feel blessed" to work for Good Shepherd and the Knights of Columbus, respectively. ✚

WHAT A JOY IT IS TO BE SIMMERING SAINTS, SIMMERING APOSTLES, SIMMERING MARTYRS.

– Blessed Mario Borzaga

(Continues from page 1)

As the reading from Isaiah continues, Jerusalem hears of the great blessings upon her, that *"the Lord will be your light forever, your God will be your glory."* (60:19)

Be Radiant! Be Living Lights!

Good Shepherd Parish and its people, too, experiences great blessing... abundant graces! The Light of Christ shines in our growing community, and in every individual.

The parish's new 5-year Parish Plan, presented under the banner of **Living Lights**, offers a thoughtfully-discerned spiritual vision of who we are as missionary disciples, and how the parish can be fruitful, communally and individually.

Mailed to every parishioner household last November, the plan document outlines five priority goals and several supporting goals. These represent areas deemed to be of critical importance in creating a welcoming parish environment and nurturing the radiance that lives within every disciple.

Jesus calls us to live our faith and shine in the darkness. He desires *"...to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."*

Ephesians 4:11-13

On the weekend of January 3/4, the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord, all Masses and preaching will highlight this exciting time in our parish history.

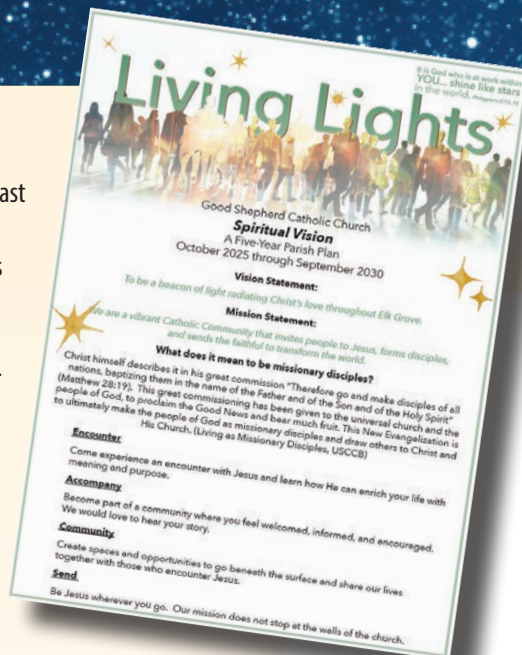
Not just a new initiative, **Living Lights** asks everyone to consider how Christ shines within them.

Does he? Are we living examples of Christ's love? Are we **Living Lights**, radiating Christ's love throughout Elk Grove?

The spirituality of missionary discipleship occurs in the context of four pillars – *Encounter, Accompany, Community and Send*. Living and breathing this terminology helps us to understand our baptismal promises with clarity. These pillars will be the strength of our community as we grow and mature in faith over the next five years.

Further, we will hear the stories and testimonies of parishioners over time – how Christ lives and moves within them.

Epiphany is the manifestation of Christ to all nations. As **Living Lights**, ensure and safeguard this truth in our community.



Commissioning:

Join us at every Mass, January 3 and 4, 2026, for a special blessing and commissioning. Receive a "STAR" pin as a symbol of your commitment to missionary discipleship!

It is God who is at work within YOU... shine like stars in the world.

Philippians 4:13,15

"I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me..."

Galatians 2:20


The Spirituality of Missionary Discipleship

Good Shepherd Parish introduced missionary discipleship to its community early in 2021. Embedded in the words of the parish prayer, the congregation invites the Holy Spirit to "form our parish as missionary disciples." As intentional disciples, we pray that we may grow in our relationship with Jesus and share the gift of salvation with everyone we meet.

Origins

What preceded this need to inspire parishioners and communicate in a coordinated fashion? A spiritual plan. That is, a vision for Good Shepherd Parish as a vibrant faith community that takes seriously Jesus' words, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19) The five-year plan considers the community, and points to spiritual areas for focus and growth.

What Influenced the formulation of a spiritual plan

 **Call to Holiness** – In April, 2021, Bishop Jaime Soto shared a pastoral letter titled, *Call to Holiness*. In this letter, he asked parishes throughout the Diocese to "revitalize" and embrace the disciplines of co-responsibility and accountability in their respective missions. Parish councils were to identify and reflect upon several topics as pathways to authentic holiness, so that "together with Christ we can be His living sacrament of joy and hope in Northern California."

 **Missionary Discipleship** – About the same time, Good Shepherd Catholic Parish became acquainted with the idea of missionary discipleship. Since the Spring of 2021, parishioners have prayed our parish prayer after communion, recognizing its emphasis on the Father's invitation "to share in the life and ministry" of Jesus. We pray that the Holy Spirit will "form our parish as a community of missionary disciples." Specifically, we petition God to lead us to "grow as an intentional community, committed to go and announce the Gospel of the Lord."


Many have memorized the words of this prayer, allowing it to resonate in their hearts and minds. Parishioners have also heard powerful homilies that explain and reinforce the concepts of missionary discipleship. Indeed, for over four years, we have read and listened, absorbing the theme and vocabulary, possibly noticing the terminology, and understanding how missionary discipleship unfolds in our own lives.

The extent to which missionary discipleship transforms parishioners' lives varies, of course. Imagine Good Shepherd Parish as a Catholic community where every member actively and intentionally lives out their faith. Think of the parish full of baptized Catholics dedicated to living and sharing the Gospel in all parts of their lives.

Good Shepherd, already an attractive and growing parish, would be a full-fledged community of missionary disciples, bringing more and more people to Jesus: *people who seek Him and need Him; people who believe but struggle with truly knowing, hearing and loving Jesus; people who may not grasp the magnitude of His gift of salvation; and people who do not yet believe, but someday will.*

Missionary discipleship isn't new. Good Shepherd's pastor,

Father Michael Vaughan, introduced it to the parish years ago, true. And, every Pope for the past 60 years preached the essence of missionary discipleship, professing its importance. The documents of Vatican II discuss it as do Papal letters and encyclicals. **It is who we are.**

 **Jesus** – But long before any of this, there was one man who spoke eloquently of this calling. In fact, "the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:25) on all his teachings and works.

Jesus. Yes, Jesus himself calls us to this work of missionary discipleship as the Gospels attest. Jesus calls us to be missionary disciples who are nothing less than Living Lights, imitating Jesus, who says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

We are Living Lights, called upon by God to shine like stars.

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How can we help you shine? With Us

New Living Lights Welcome Center

In recent weeks, a curious "reception" desk commands the east end of the narthex. As part of the parish commitment to usher Living Lights, the welcome "center" continues to take shape.

Here, parishioners will experience the new beginnings of the Greeter Ministry. Trained desk volunteers will staff the desk before and after Sunday Masses, equipped with a growing cache of information and resources.

The purpose of the welcome center aims to "help parishioners find their mission." All kinds of "tools" will evolve and unfold over time to give insight to parishioners seeking to receive and give the light of Christ. Additionally, all ministries will rotate volunteers to staff the desk, allowing opportunity for parishioners to delve into featured ministries and discern participation.

Stop by!

Momentum

The parish's spiritual vision reflects the power of the Holy Spirit, working in and among clergy, staff and parish leaders who have prayed, discerned and determined its content. Therefore, the parish plan likewise possesses the power of the Holy Spirit to instill within parishioners a deep sense of meaning and purpose as children of God, chosen and blessed. How we communicate, support and live the spiritual plan, in essence, is *cooperation and collaboration with the Holy Spirit – with God's grace.*

As missionary disciples, answer the call to holiness and mission and respond to what Jesus asks of each parishioner, personally, and the parish as a whole. Perpetuate the bright light of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

Luminosity

The plan echoes the overarching Christian mission to be Christ's light in the world. Objectives aim to highlight Good Shepherd's community function in that mission – that is, the parish is a "place" of growth and service. Here, parishioners can deepen their understanding of Christian purpose and meaning through the spiritual vision presented in the new parish plan.

- **Share** the vision for the parish as described within its 5-year plan
- **Instill** a sense that Good Shepherd is a vital and spirited Catholic faith community
- **Put** Jesus at the center of everything
- **Underscore** a zeal for souls and a mission to foster personal relationships with Jesus
- **Communicate** an open/welcoming campus that facilitates growth in virtue/holiness
- **Appeal to and activate** disciples for mission, both in ministry and apostleship
- **Reach** active and inactive parishioners within the defined parish boundaries as well as those who are yet to develop their faith and relationship with Jesus, those who have fallen away, those who are seeking and yearning to know Christ, and those who are unchurched and unaware of the Good News (cf. *Evangelii Gaudium*, 15).

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Take it to the Next-Level!

Journeying together as missionary disciples means stepping forward in intentional stewardship of our Catholic faith. Embracing the pillars of discipleship – *encounter, accompany, community and send* – we illuminate the paths of others. We serve as Living Lights, allowing God's work to shine through us.

Translate the specifics of missionary discipleship into real-time, personalized action. What does missionary discipleship look like for you?

Take a look at some of the upcoming events and activities on the facing page. See the pillars of missionary discipleship come to light!

God is at work within YOU. He has designed a course – *a mission* – for every soul.

"Each of us, as living cells in the body of Christ, contributes to this cosmic plan through our own growth in faith and love and by supporting the same growth in others. Hence, the immense value of corporate worship and sharing and celebrating the experience of the Mystery of Christ in a faith community."

Father Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O.

Go MAKE DISCIPLES

Come as you are.

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

"Real simplicity will restore us. But it will require swimming upstream."

Lisa Braininkmeyer
Founder and Chief Purpose Officer, Walking with Purpose

God doesn't want to simplify our lives so they are boring and empty. He wants us to clear space so that we can get to know Him more. Clear space? In your already busy schedule? Come as you are and join the women of Walking with Purpose for the *Keeping in Balance* video, *Getting a Grip Through Simplicity*.

Over coffee and great discussion, we are going to take a deep dive into simplicity, learning how to transform our hearts while embracing a life with less noise.

Our next Coffee Connect will be on January 10 at 9am in the Fr. Philip Wells Hall.
All women are welcome to join!

For more information email Donna at donna@1660@gmail.com or Julie at julie@walkingwithpurpose@gmail.com.

Our mission is to help every Catholic woman and girl in America encounter Jesus Christ through our Bible studies.

walking with purpose

www.walkingwithpurpose.com

Encounter—Come experience an encounter with Jesus and learn how He can enrich your life with meaning and purpose.

The Walking with Purpose Bible Study for women gives more than 200 women the chance to break open scripture and encounter Jesus. In its second year, women report a life-changing and profound "walk" with Jesus. Come and see what it is all about at **Coffee Connect** on **Saturday, January 10, 2026** at the Father Philip Wells Parish Hall. **Topic:** *Getting a Grip through Simplicity*

Accompany—Become part of a community where you feel welcomed, informed and encouraged. We would love to hear your story.

Encourage and accompany youth and young adults (13-25 y.o.) to share their gifts and talents in this **Music, Art and Poetry Contest** on **February 28, 2026**. The event theme, *Made in the Image of God*, gives young talent the perfect stage-scape to reflect God and shine like stars! Save the date and plan on attending! Delicious dinner available for purchase that night.

Community—Create spaces and opportunities to go beneath the surface and share our lives together with those who encounter Jesus.

The Grove Youth Ministry offers this first-ever "Senior Ball." If you're 60-years-young or older, save the date! **Saturday, January 17, 2026. Dancing through the Decades is for you!** What a great way to support our youth AND have fun with friends and family. The sounds of all the "oldies and goodies" will play as you reminisce over your favorite tunes.

The beacon shines across the harbor signaling Good Shepherd's 29th annual Crab Feed just ahead! There is nothing quite like this time-honored friend-raiser, delicious crab and the fellowship! Save the date: **Saturday, February 21, 2025**. Tickets for our **Harbor Lights Crab Feed 2026** will go on sale at weekend Masses early in January. (It often sells out quickly.)

MUSIC, ART AND POETRY


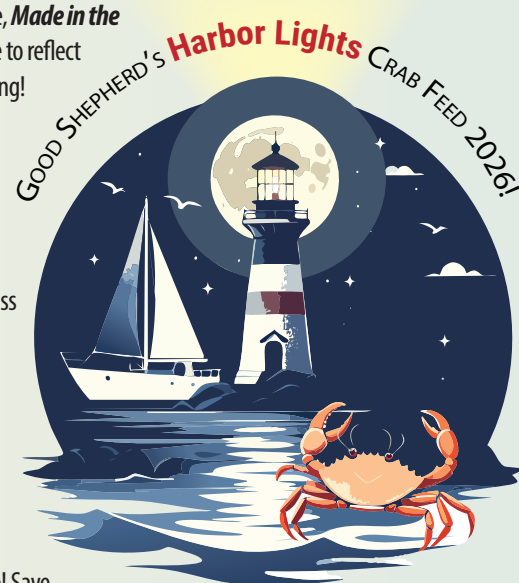
St. Josephine Bakhita Ministry
3rd Annual Talent Contest

MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

IMAGO DEI

2.28.2026

6 - 9 P.M. | GOOD SHEPHERD PARISH 9539 RACQUET CT, ELK GROVE, CA 95758
Youth and Young Adults (13-25 y.o.), register now! Shine your light through the arts!
MORE INFORMATION: WWW.GSCEG.ORG VALERIE.RAMOS@COMCAST.NET

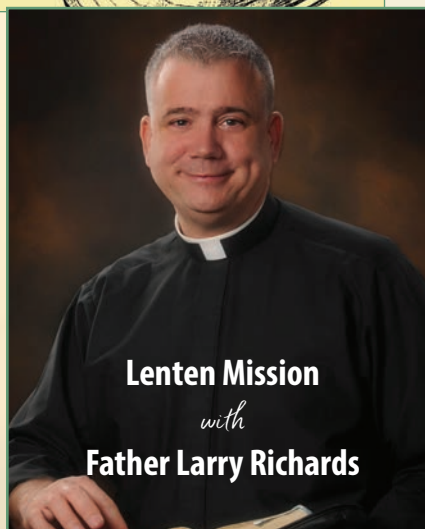
DANCING THROUGH THE Decades

JAN Saturday 17 FREE ADMISSION

SENIOR BALL FOR OUR GOOD SHEPHERD PARISHIONERS
60+ YEARS YOUNG
ROCK YOUR BEST 50s-80s LOOK — CHOOSE YOUR DECADE AND COME READY TO DANCE!
4:30PM-7:30PM LOCATED IN THE HALL
RSUP Now!



Lenten Mission
with
Father Larry Richards



Send — Be Jesus wherever you go. Our mission does not stop at the walls of the church.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 18 as does our heightened commitments to prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Etched deeply into our Catholic practice, we also benefit from a **Lenten Mission** with focused preaching and teaching.

This year, **Father Larry Richards** joins us at Good Shepherd for a powerful week, **March 9 - 12, 2026**. Save these dates! Father Larry travels from Pennsylvania, serving there as a pastor in the Diocese of Erie. Well known for his EWTN radio broadcasting platform, he also has authored books and hosts a popular podcast, *Anchored in Hope*.

- **Monday** - *God's Love and Prayer*
- **Tuesday** - *Love of Others*, in the context of a Mass
- **Wednesday** - *Passion of Christ/the need for Confession* (confessions follow)
- **Thursday** - *Adoration and Healing*, in the context of Eucharistic Adoration and a Healing Service.

Listen and hear as Fr. Larry's mission **SENDS** us out renewed and ready for the Light of Christ on Easter as Living Lights.



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9539 RACQUET COURT
ELK GROVE, CA 95758
Pastor: Rev. Michael Vaughan

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Let's Go

GROW IN FAITH
& DISCIPLESHIP!

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Visit GSCCEG.org to learn more about upcoming events.

In Community, we flourish

January 4 — Knights of Columbus monthly Pancake Breakfast, celebrating Epiphany and Living Lights!



Celebrate with breakfast fare and "additions" of tasty snacks from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Father Philip Wells Hall.

February 7 — Fiat Catholic Young Adults Speed Dating!



Right in time for Valentine's! For young adults 18-39 years of age, this structured "speed dating" event offers a fun, fast-paced approach to introductory conversations and chemistry. For more events & updates, follow us on Instagram @fiat_ya, or find us on Facebook by searching Fiat Catholic Young Adults.

February 18 — Ash Wednesday Join Good Shepherd for Ash Wednesday, commencing the season of Lent. Consult the parish website for Mass times. *Create in me a clean heart O Lord. (Psalm 51)*

February 20 — Soup for the Soul

Gather on the six Fridays of Lent (2/20 through 3/27) for a simple meal of soup and bread. In community, watch a selected video series (TBA) offering thought-provoking content as we grow through Lent.



February 20 — Stations of the Cross. Following Soup for the Soul, prayerful, clergy-led Stations of the Cross in the church at 7 p.m.. Or, Wednesdays at 1:15 p.m. beginning Feb. 25 with St. Elizabeth Ann Seton School.

February 21 — Harbor Lights Crab Feed! Don't miss Good Shepherd's 29th Annual Crab Feed! Tickets go on sale early in January! Be a Living Light and gather in community for this longstanding parish tradition as its beacon shines out upon Elk Grove.



February 28 — 2026 Youth & Young Adult Music, Art and Poetry Contest. Save this date and plan to be wowed! One of Good Shepherd's newer events, this contest welcomes young talent and showcases the amazing gifts of youth and young adults with the theme, Made in the Image of God. Let's shine a spotlight on these young Living Lights.

March 9-12 — Lenten Mission with Father Larry Richards. Reserve these days on your calendar and prepare for a powerful Lenten mission with Father Larry. Well regarded for his EWTN radio broadcasts and his podcast, Anchored in Hope, Father Larry will guide us through nightly talks engaging us in a transformative message as we move through the Lenten wilderness to the Light of the resurrected Christ.

