



Sierra Vista  
Presbyterian Church

# Church Information Form

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Sierra Vista  
Presbyterian Church

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Church Office Hours:

Monday - Friday:

9 am - 5 pm



# What We Believe:

**W**e believe that the great purpose towards which each human life is drawn is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. We glorify God by recognizing and receiving His authoritative self-revelation, both in the infallible Scriptures of the Old and New Testament and the incarnation of Jesus Christ, God the Son. With Christians everywhere, we worship the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who is both one essence and three persons. We affirm, with Christians everywhere, that Jesus Christ is both truly God and truly human. We further believe that we can confess Jesus Christ as Lord and God only through the work of His Spirit, God the Holy Spirit.

The present disordered state of the world, in which we and all things are subject to misery and evil, is not God's doing but is rather a result of humanity's free, sinful rebellion against God's will. No part of human life is untouched by sin. Our desires are no longer trustworthy guides to goodness, and what seems natural to us no longer corresponds to God's design.

Jesus Christ is the only Way and the sole path by which sinners can be set free from sin and become children of God. In union with Christ through the power of the Spirit, we are brought into right relation with God the Father, who receives us as His adopted children. This union with Christ is not something that we do or something we can achieve on our own. We believe that God in His grace redeemed us while we were yet sinners. We respond to His grace and love by

repenting of our sinfulness and requesting forgiveness. In His love, He receives us, accepts us, and adopts us.

We believe we are gathered by the Spirit into a community that is built up and equipped to be salt and light in the world. Christ sends us into the world to make disciples of all nations. In this community/family, we find our new identity as brothers and sisters of one another, since we now share one Father. This church family is called to serve those outside the church by seeking the welfare of the city in which we live. In the context of the church, God's grace is extended through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.





# Church History:

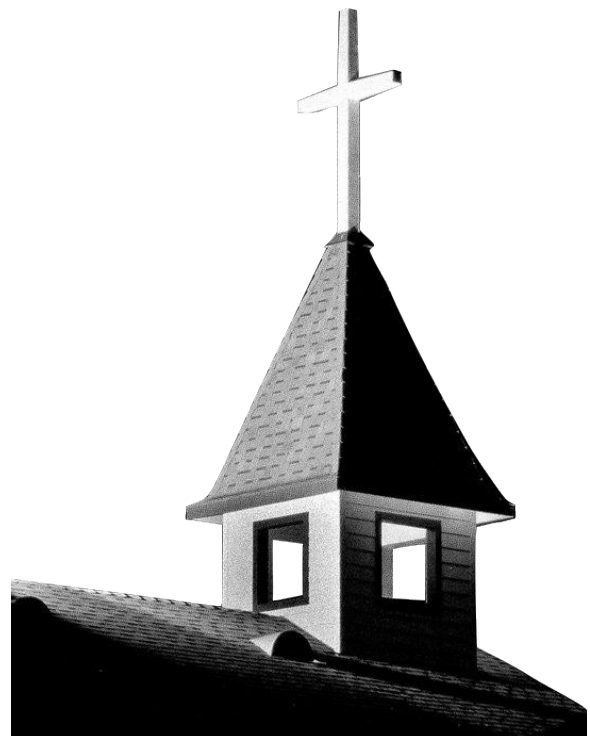
Sierra Vista Presbyterian Church (SVPC) began as a home Bible Study on a stormy night in January 1983. Betty Braddy, a member of the Bible study, envisioned a Presbyterian church in Oakhurst. A group began to gather at the Braddy residence to pray and ask God's blessing on this venture. They advertised in the local paper promoting their group, and as the Bible study and prayer group continued to grow, it was apparent that God was forming the congregation of the church. In May of 1984, Sierra Vista was recognized as a "New Church Development" project with Presbyterian Church USA (PCUSA). Within a couple of months, the San Joaquin Presbytery had purchased the property for the church, which consisted of the land and a house that became the chapel. The congregation finally set foot in their new sanctuary, formally a three-car garage, on Easter of 1985.

Rev. Brad Durley, a member of the original steering committee, stepped up to be the first organizing pastor of the church. However, Durley tragically fell victim to a fatal accident on his first day on the job. The church slowly recovered from this trial with the help of many guest preachers, including the interim Rev. Dale Cooper. In December 1985, the church found a new organizing pastor, Rev. Bill Welch.

Rev. Welch was the organizing pastor for 19 years. Over his tenure the congregation grew substantially, leading to the construction of the outside amphitheater in 1988, the Sunday school building (Promiseland), and

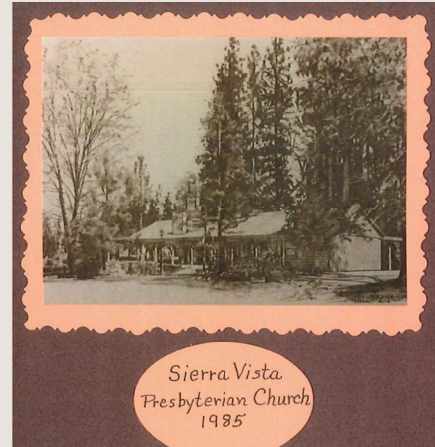
finally our current sanctuary in 1995. Rev. Welch established many church traditions that we use today, including: summer Outdoor Worship Services, Baptisms at Bass Lake, Easter Sunday Sunrise Service, Maundy Thursday Service, and the Christmas Candle Light Service. He took leadership of Sierra Vista's community outreach, involving the church with local ministries like the Manna House and Mountain Ministerial Association, as well as promoting the church's youth programs.

Rev. Welch moved on in 2004 and Rev. Rick Irish stepped in as the interim pastor. In February 2006, Rev. Rick Lemberg began as the new senior pastor. Rev. Lemberg expanded Sierra Vista's community



outreach, utilizing our property and resources to bless the greater mountain area, and notably led the church when in 2013 it transitioned denominations from the PCUSA to ECO, a Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. Two significant programs he developed during his pastorate are the Jubilee program, began in 2009, which employs unemployed and underemployed people in the community, and the Refuge Shelter program, began in 2014, in which Sierra Vista partners with other local churches to provide housing and a hot meal to homeless people in the community on particularly cold nights. Rev. Lemberg also introduced the tradition of “All Fools Sunday,” a theatrical and comedic departure from our normal worship service held a few weeks after Easter, involving a theme, skits, and dressing-up in honor of an ancient church tradition of playing jokes on each other in remembrance of Jesus playing the greatest joke of all on Satan and death. During Rev. Lemberg’s tenure, Sierra Vista organized a wood ministry (providing tree removal and firewood for mountain area families in need,) designed a sanctioned disc-golf course on the church property, remodeled the youth room, built a playground accessible to local families, and constructed a patio and barbeque area -which during the COVID-19 pandemic proved invaluable as a space for Bible Studies and church meetings.

Today, Sierra Vista continues to navigate a changing world, while serving God in the mountain area as we exist to be a Christian Community for the Larger Community.



The original church building in 1985



Easter Sunrise service in 2011



The playground and its “Noah’s ark”



All Fools Sunday in 2023, “Carnival” themed

# Our Church:

## Staff & Leadership:

### Staff:

We currently employ both a Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor. Our children are led a part-time Director of Children's Ministries and our youth by a part-time Director of Youth Ministries. In addition, there is a Worship Coordinator, a Church Media Coordinator, an Executive Assistant/Bookkeeper, and a Parish Associate. There are also two custodial staff who oversee workers from our Jubilee Program employed in maintaining the building and grounds.

### Leadership:

In addition to our paid staff, our Session consists of eight Elders, each serving up to two three-year terms. We are proud to be led by a truly multi-generational Session, one of the youngest in the state! There are 24 Deacons currently serving 15 parishes in our congregation.

9 Staff



8 Elders



24 Deacons

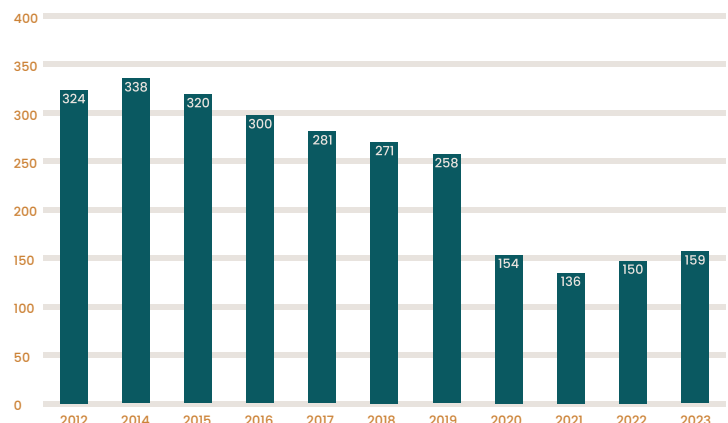


## Congregation:

The SVPC congregation includes persons of all ages, from infancy to over 90 years of age. Our current Sunday morning attendance averages around 159 and we currently receive between 80-100 views of our Sunday livestream each week.

Our children's and youth programs serve approximately 24 children and youth on Sunday mornings during worship.

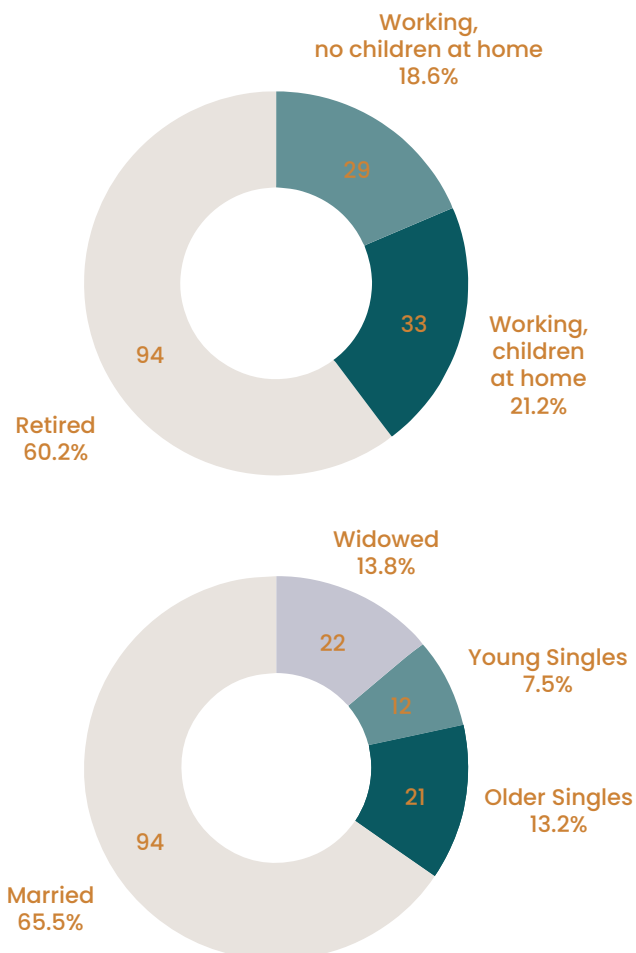
Average Sunday Attendance





Our combined youth programs serve approximately 40 each week between their two youth meetings. Our young adults' Bible Study serves approximately 12 young people each week.

The majority of congregates are either retired or of retirement age, and the remainder of the congregation is fairly evenly divided between young families, working families with grown children. Many in the congregation are married, and the remainder is split between younger and older singles and widows/widowers.





## Campus:

The SVPC campus is located on 15 acres on the west side of CA SR-41 as it enters Oakhurst. The main building includes the original chapel, church offices, the kitchen, and 350-person sanctuary. The adjacent building, Promiseland, houses youth and children's spaces, including the nursery. Outside is an amphitheater (used for outdoor worship services as well as weddings and other special events,) a playground (known in the community for its Noah's

ark play-structure,) a covered barbeque area, community garden, prayer path, disc golf course, patio (used for large church gatherings,) "knoll" (used for campfires and the Easter Sunrise service,) and a fenced-in solar farm. Special efforts have been made to preserve as many of the trees and understory plants as possible when doing building projects. We are blessed to own our campus outright, without outstanding debt.





## Worship Services:

We have one Sunday morning service from 9:30-10:45 AM, in-person and streamed online. It consists of a call to worship, worship through song, announcements, Children's Message, prayer for our church and larger community, our Moment for Missions (a short presentation on a ministry or mission Sierra Vista leads or supports) held twice a month, an offering, the message, a closing song, and a benediction. Communion is offered on the first Sunday of each month. Children and adults share in the worship together and after the Children's Message children are welcome to stay or be

dismissed to Promiseland for Sunday School. Special services throughout the year include All Fools Sunday, Worship Nights, Maundy Thursday communion service, Good Friday service, Easter Sunrise service outdoors, Longest Night/Blue Christmas service, and Christmas Eve evening candlelight services.

During the summer when weather is favorable, the service is held in the outdoor amphitheater (often bringing in summer travelers looking for a place to worship on Sunday morning.)

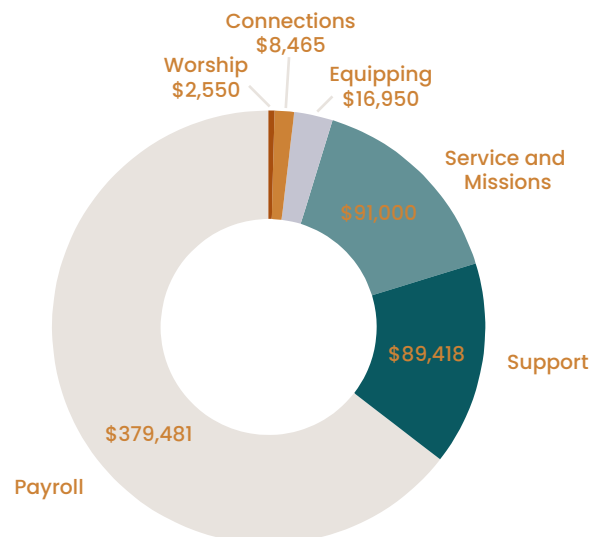
## Stewardship:

Our total cash assets are \$558,390. Included in that is a Building Fund in the amount of \$371,972. We have no long term liabilities.

We embrace cheerful giving of our time, talents and financial gifts with an understanding that all we have belongs to God. We believe that financial giving is a form of worship and include a time during the Sunday Morning worship to physically "pass the plate" in addition to our online giving options. We urge covenant partners and attenders to contribute financially as they are able and feel called to, encouraging them to be consistent, thoughtful, faithful and generous.

"The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it..." -Psalm 24:1

SVPC General Fund Budget



# Ministries:

## Children's Ministry:

Involvement of our children is important to our church family. On occasion they help with the Sunday morning service; ushering, serving communion, or participating in the worship team or vocal choir. A beloved part of our Sunday morning service is the Children's Message, when children are invited to sit up on stage with the Children's Director to listen to a short 'sermon' before heading out to Sunday School. Sunday School has as its goal to lay a foundation for understanding the Bible as a whole, with Jesus and His great rescue as its focal point. Sunday School includes the Nursery (which offers childcare for 0-3 year olds) and classes for Pre-K - 5th grade.

The Children's ministry often hosts mid-week programs; including after-school programs, Children's Choir, a mid-week family night and children classes, play rehearsals, and (our biggest offering and outreach over the years,) a summer VBS program. Our Children's Director periodically hosts events designed to support local families, including a Parent's Date Night, which offers childcare for an evening to give parents time together, and a Clothing Swap, which invites families to "shop" clothing from a closet of donated clothes at the church. The heart of our children's program is to support and demonstrate God's love to local families while helping the kids of our church feel important and included as members of the Sierra Vista church family.



## Youth Ministry:

As with our Children's Ministry, involving our youth is important to our church family, especially within the leadership and organization of the church. Sierra Vista has historically invited high school students to serve as deacons as well as involving youth in worship services as ushers, in serving communion, or in leading worship with the worship band and choirs.

Jr. High and High School students have the opportunity to attend a blended class offered during the Sunday worship service, particularly focused on the Bible, the life of faith, and how it all connects. Periodically this class will take a break to allow youth to sit in on the message.

The youth ministry periodically offers a Confirmation Class that digs deeper into the Bible and Christian theology. This class gives interested students a grounded

understanding of the Christian faith, as well as opportunities to meet our elders and join the church as a member.

Our Jr. High youth group meets weekly in Promiseland from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm on Wednesdays for fun and fellowship, and serves a number of youth outside of our church. On every third Wednesday of the month, a dinner is offered from 5:30-6:30 to provide more time for fellowship and relationship-building.

Our High School youth group meets weekly in Promiseland on Sundays from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm and likewise serves a number of youth outside of our church.

Both Junior High and High school groups have been involved in short-term missions and summer camps.





## Adult Ministries:

Ministries for adults include an Adult Sunday School led by the pastor, Men's Bible Study, the Women of the Word (WOW) women's bible study, Young Adult Bible Study, Tabitha Project sewing ministry, Prayer Shawl ministry (a group that knits and crochets shawls to be prayed over and given to those in the church or community grieving or experiencing hardship), and various other small groups.

## Music Ministries:

Music is an important and valued aspect of our worship. Worship through song involves a blend of traditional and contemporary styles and genres and includes our Praise Band, Choir (Sierra Singers), Handbell Choir (Sierra Ringers), and Sound Team.

## Community Outreach:

Our Deacons are assigned parishes and are responsible for caring for the needs of our church family and community. Our Wood Ministry has become well known in the area as a source of help for those in need of firewood during the colder seasons. The Refuge Shelter is available to the homeless in our local community on cold nights as a safe and warm place to find a hot meal and somewhere to sleep. Our Jubilee Ministry helps employ those who

are unemployed or underemployed, either with the church or with a local business. We also provide meeting spaces for local groups such as Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, the Boy Scouts of America, Girl Scouts of the USA, and a local TOPS (Taking Pounds Off Sensibly) group. Many ministries to our church family also minister to our community, involving people who do not attend our church or church at all.

Sierra Vista also has a unique history of encouraging its staff to engage with the local community. Pastors and Associate Pastors have previously coached at the High School and previous youth staff have led or participated in high school or community-wide clubs and organizations.



# Missions:

Sierra Vista is a Christian community that exists for the larger community. We view “mission” as a verb - an action word. Our heart is to be involved in mission outreach with both our resources and our people. Through exposure, education, and individual involvement we seek to have our congregation become global citizens motivated to know what God is doing in the world - and to be actively participating in His work. Our church has been committed to outreach within our local community, to regional missions/ministries, and international mission outreach since its founding.

Locally, we are involved in supporting Helping Hands Pregnancy and Parenting Center, as well as the Manna House, which provides food and clothing services, and financial and general assistance to those in need. Many members of our church serve or have served at Christian camps and conferences in the surrounding mountain area. We are also involved in supporting the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at the high school and the work of YWAM (Youth With a Mission).

Regionally, SVPC supports the Madera Rescue Mission’s work “Serving the least, the last, and the lost...”; FIRM (Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries) outreach to refugee populations who have come to Fresno from around the world; the college ministry of Intervarsity at California State University, Fresno; JARON (Jesus’ Ambassadors Reaching Out to Nations) Ministries International which exists to equip leaders for more effective Christian service whether





that be locally or internationally.

We have sent members on short-term mission trips including the Philippines, Ecuador, Mexico, Sudan, and the USA. We have had individuals from our church who have committed to long-term mission work in South America, Eastern Europe, Africa, and Japan.

We support international mission organizations and individuals who are committed to serving people who have been unreached and underserved. In Eastern Europe, we are supporting work among the outcast Roma people of the Balkans and Germany. In India, Witnessing Ministries of Christ works with the Dalits - the “untouchable” lowest caste in society. Pioneers Missions sends missionaries to proclaim Christ’s love to Muslim countries. Spectrum Ministries serves the poor of Tijuana, Mexico. In Japan, former members of our church continue to reflect Christ’s light in the darkness.

For a full list of the missions, ministries, and individuals we support, visit our website at ‘Missions’ under the ‘About’ tab.





# The Community We Serve:

Oakhurst is probably best known for its proximity to the South Gate of Yosemite National Park. The park entrance is 14 miles north of town, and the iconic Yosemite Valley is another 30 miles from there. One of the best aspects of Oakhurst is its central geographical location, offering quick access to many of the different regions within California. An array of diverse places are within a 3-4 hour drive; from numerous coastal locations along Highway 1, to the beautifully rugged Eastern Sierras, to the State capital of Sacramento or the many historic gold rush towns along the Sierra Nevada Foothills, to the uniquely bustling, artistic city of San Francisco. For a wider range of shopping, entertainment, and eateries, the City of Fresno, with a population of over 500,000 is within an hour's drive down the hill.

Oakhurst experiences all four seasons, and while the winter precipitation levels can affect accessibility, there are always pockets of natural beauty to enjoy and explore in the area. Some favorite winter activities include skiing at Badger Pass in Yosemite, cross-country skiing on Glacier Point Road, or snowshoeing through the sequoia groves. Springtime is a respite of beauty as wildflowers and other flowering vegetation explode throughout the entire foothill and mountain area, it's a perfect time for long drives and hikes. Summers can be dry and hot, but thankfully a short drive up one of the local mountain roads will have you at a higher elevation and cooler temps. Watersports on Bass Lake are popular, as well as horseback riding, rock climbing,





and 4-wheeling on back mountain roads.. In autumn, many locals enjoy driving into Yosemite to see the dogwoods, black oak, and big-leaf maple trees change color, or heading over to the Eastern Sierras to see groves of aspen trees turn to blazing gold.

Oakhurst, and the surrounding communities of Coarsegold, Ahwahnee, North Fork, and Bass Lake, form what is locally referred to as the “mountain area.” While the surrounding towns have local businesses and shops, Oakhurst is the largest hub, with grocery stores, hardware stores, auto shops, medical facilities, various eateries, and coffee and gift shops. Being a tourist town, there is a large array of hotels and other lodging options for those visiting the National Park. The Oakhurst area is also home to several camps and their staff, serving as attractions to younger people and families to come live and work in the area.

There are a number of public elementary schools in Oakhurst and the surrounding area, which funnel to two major public high schools. Many families in the area also opt to homeschool, either independently or in connection with a local charter school that

offers curriculum and classes for K-12. People who live here include a number of families that have been here for generations, as well as a growing number of transplants from all over. Most people that move here are looking for a slower pace of life and a smaller, more intentional community, or for proximity to Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada mountains. The neighboring community of North Fork has a claim to fame for being “the exact center of California”, and its been said that Oakhurst is “a little off-center”. This is true both geographically and of its personality. It can be a quirky little town at times, but also charming and close-knit, and can quickly feel like home.

