



# Presbytery of San José

## January 16, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Grace and peace in the name of Jesus Christ in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Next Monday is the birthday of the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

I am not one who just pulls out a quote from Dr. King once a year around this time. I believe that we are called to be about God's justice every day of the year, to care for the vulnerable and marginalized, to stand with those who are pressed by the weight of systems, actors and policies that are death-dealing and which stifle the flourishing of our common humanity.

Several years ago, there was a good effort by the 223rd General Assembly (2018) to make Dr. King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" as part of our PC(USA) *Book of Confessions*. Although Dr. King's Letter didn't pass the voting by presbyteries, it was commended for study, conversation, and reflection. The Assembly noted how important his pastoral and prophetic word was more than ever. As I said, the work, word, and witness for God's transformative justice is a daily call whether in 2018 or in 2026.

When we consider just this week: hearing and receiving testimonies from faith leaders, community members, and residents in Minneapolis and the Twin Cities, these are troubling and perilous times, where posting a once-a-year quote from a revered civil rights leader just doesn't cut it. We need a daily commitment to struggle together. Why? Because it's what Jesus did, it's what Jesus does, it's what Jesus would do.

The living God in Christ is alive and actively at work. Through the voice, hands, heart, feet, mind, and life of you and me - how do we embody the life-giving, love-extending, arms-embracing, be-with-everyone kind of life that our Lord Christ lived? When He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) he is making a declaration of freedom: in His life there is truth and the way, His way is true life, His truth is the way to life. As followers of Jesus, we have been set free to follow His way, to see the truth, to follow His life so that all may have life.

When we hear our leaders' hopes and dreams of greed for power, privilege, oil money, grabbing Venezuela and Greenland. . .that's not way, truth, and life. When documented immigrants and American citizens on the streets live in fear, fearing if they will return home, that's not way, truth, and life.

Let's use the freedom we have in Christ for the work and witness of justice everywhere, everyday, in every way that the Spirit enables you to do so. While we have breath, says the Psalmist, let us praise God. We praise God with our voices, with our hearts, and yes, with our daily living that extends and embodies God's love and compassion and care to all people. Yes, let us remember and celebrate the late Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on Monday. But don't stop there. After all, Dr. King strived to follow the call of Christ everyday. It was that daily call that prompted him to devote his life for the work of justice for all, even to the point of death to himself.

In Joy and Justice,  
Neal

#CalledToCommunity  
#CommittedToJustice

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## Upcoming Travels/Preaching of our Executive Presbyter

- January 26-28, 2026: Lead, Presbytery Clergy Retreat at Villa Maria Del Mar, Santa Cruz
- January 29-February 1, 2026: Strategic Planning Meeting and Installation of the General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches at Hannover, Germany

*If you would like to invite the EP to guest preach, facilitate a class, lead a retreat, help with strategic visioning/planning, or grab a cup of coffee, email [Neal@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Neal@sanjosepby.org) or call/text (408) 763-5004*

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## Welcome our New Staff

We offer a heartfelt and warm welcome to our new staff team members: Stephanie Cerrito as Executive Assistant, Colin Richardson as Communications Coordinator, and Veronica Ota as Peacemaking and Justice Advocate. They will start next Wednesday, January 21.

Stephanie will provide principal administrative support to the Executive Presbyter, with additional support to the Stated Clerk, Treasurer, and Accountant, and, as needed, to the committees/entities resourced by the Presbytery executive staff. Stephanie can be reached at: [Stephanie@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Stephanie@sanjosepby.org)

Colin will coordinate the messaging content and ethos of our weekly Digest newsletter, occasional website updates, our social media channels (primarily Facebook), our season Lent-Easter and Advent-Christmas devotionals, and other print and digital communications. Colin can be reached at: [Colin@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Colin@sanjosepby.org)

Veronica will be a resource for information-gathering and dissemination and collaboration in the areas of immigration justice, racial and gender justice, creation care. She'll be an accompanier with some of our churches, the Peacemaking and Justice Working Group, our Hunger Advocate, our affiliated non-profit entities, community groups, among several partners. Veronica can be reached at: [Veronica@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Veronica@sanjosepby.org)

Welcome Stephanie, Colin, and Veronica to the Presbytery of San José as we join in ministry to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.

Here's a little bit about them in their own words:



Greetings! I'm Stephanie Cerrito and was born and raised in Los Gatos, CA. I have over 15 years of Executive Administrative experience, mostly in the Tech industry. I have a significant other named Dominick and my sweet dog, Sophie. I am ½ Italian and Irish and LOVE to cook. I am an avid sports fan of the NFL and MLB (SF Giants). I like to play tennis, pickleball, go hiking, and go to the beach. Most importantly, I am a woman of Faith and growing everyday. I feel blessed to have this opportunity to serve in this Ministry with you all.

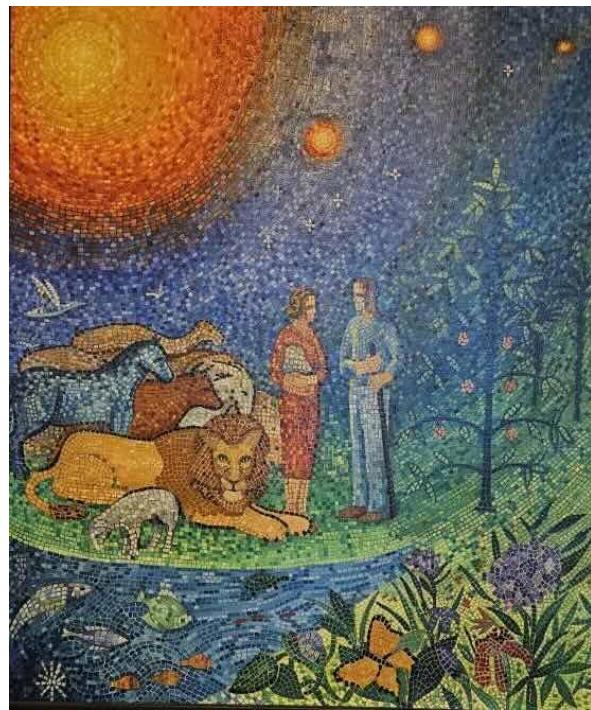


Hello everyone! My name is Colin Richardson, and I'm excited to be joining the Presbytery as Communications Coordinator. In this role, I support the Presbytery by helping share our stories and shape communication across our digital platforms. A little about me: I'm a recent UC Santa Barbara graduate and a San Jose native. Outside of work, I enjoy running and hiking, watching HGTV, listening to podcasts (currently *Good Hang with Amy Poehler*), and trying new coffee spots. I look forward to getting to know you all.



Hello, my name is Veronica Ota and I'm honored to serve as your new Peacemaking and Justice Advocate! I grew up in Pasadena, CA, studied Japanese culture at Tufts University and received my MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. I am passionate about education. I've taught middle school math and choir in public schools; developed a Peace Camp program at First Presbyterian Church, Altadena (my home church); and lead composting workshops for all ages. I also love to sing and play guitar, bass, trumpet, and viola. You might bump into me at a thrift shop or farmer's market – my favorite spots!

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## 2026 Lent-Easter Devotional Booklet

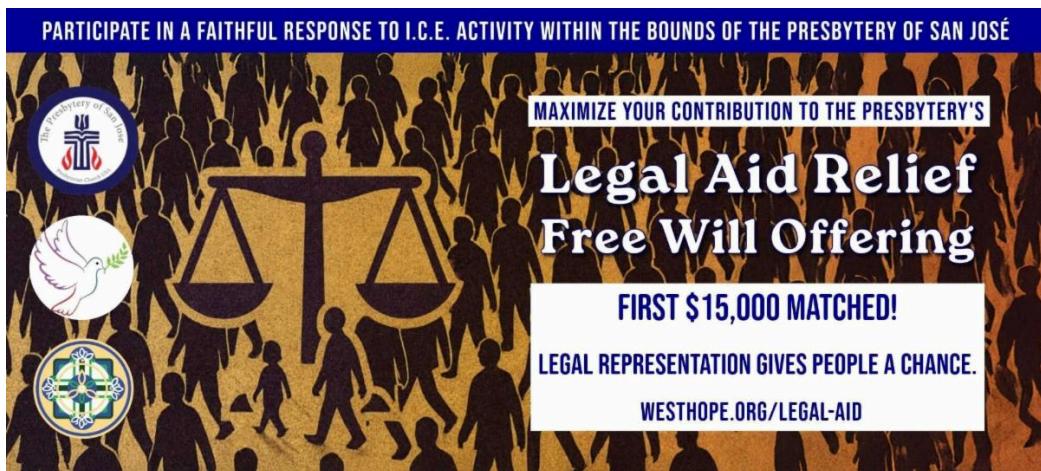
We just finished the Christmas season, now into Epiphany, and Ash Wednesday is soon upon us, which will begin the sacred Lenten season from February 18th through Easter Sunday on April 5.

All members of the Presbytery are invited once again to contribute your creative writing through a brief reflection and prayer based on one of the Scripture readings from the Revised Daily Lectionary-Year A. This has been a blessing to many throughout the Presbytery and around the world as we journey together to the cross and to the empty tomb.

The photo above will be the cover image of the devotional booklet. It is a mosaic from Trinity Presbyterian Church-San José.

You may sign up at [this link](#)

Please submit your 250-word piece by February 9 to [Neal@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Neal@sanjosepby.org)



A report issued November 20, 2025 by the American Immigration Council indicated that without the benefit of an attorney at immigration court proceedings, people in our Presbytery have a 70% chance of being deported, often erroneously.

In response to this, the Presbytery's Peace and Justice Working Group has worked with EP Neal Presa to establish a free will offering initiative to support crucial legal counsel for people facing the threat of deportation. The Working Group and Presbytery staff have identified Peacemaking Offering and other related special funds that can provide up to \$15,000 in matching funds. This initiative will run through Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2026.

We invite you to give generously to two organizations in urgent need:

- Amigos Center Rapid Response Network of Santa Clara County
- The Santa Cruz Community Action Board
- Your support helps ensure access to legal counsel and a fair day in court for our immigrant neighbors.

How To Contribute:

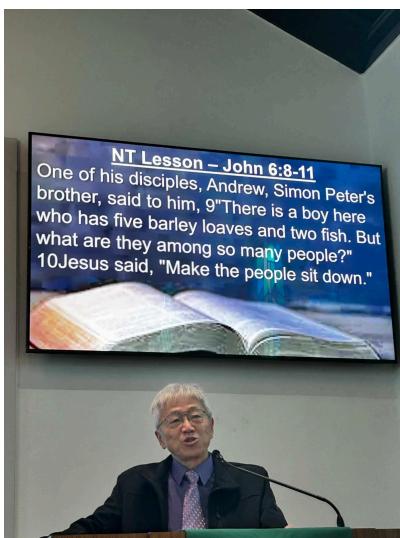
- Amigos de Guadalupe Rapid Response Network Legal Services of Santa Clara County [amigoscenter.org](http://amigoscenter.org)

-Click in the drop-down menu underneath "My donation is for\*" and select "Presbytery of San José Donor - RRN Legal Services/ Family Support"

- Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County ([cabinc.org](http://cabinc.org)) Please check "SCCIP-IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES—Presbytery of San José Donor".  
Or:
  - Cash dropped off at 406 Main Street to 2nd floor reception
  - Checks sent to 406 Main Street Ste 207, Watsonville, CA 95016
  - Stock Donation: Please email CFO directly [lorettaz@cabinc.org](mailto:lorettaz@cabinc.org)

If you have questions about this initiative, please contact EP Neal Presa, Westhope Presbyterian Church pastor The Rev. Erik Swanson ([esfishrev@gmail.com](mailto:esfishrev@gmail.com)), Peace and Justice Working Group co-chairs The Rev. Julie Porras-Center ([pastorjulie@somoswatsonville.com](mailto:pastorjulie@somoswatsonville.com)) and Beth Wylie ([bethwylie21@gmail.com](mailto:bethwylie21@gmail.com))







## ICYMI: The Rev. Jason Barraca installed at Lincoln Avenue-Salinas

Last Saturday, January 10th, The Rev. Jason Barraca was installed as the Designated Pastor of the Lincoln Avenue Presbyterian Church in Salinas, and becoming the 11th installed pastor in that congregation's history, having been founded in 1898.

Jason served there for 10 years as their Temporary Stated Supply, providing steady pastoral leadership. Jason grew up in that church as a teen, and after college and service in the military, he returned and sensed God's call to ministry. He enrolled at Fuller Theological Seminary, and then helped lead youth ministry, and after several other ministry roles in the congregation, he was called to serve there in pastoral ministry.

Lincoln Avenue Presbyterian Church is a historic Japanese American congregation. During the mid-20th century, many members were interned at one of several U.S. concentration camps. Those members stored their belongings in the church's fellowship hall in hopes they would return. One of their current members, 92 yr old Loren Kitamura, was interned at one of those camps as a school-aged kid.

Installing Jason at a worship service with the ancient gesture of "laying upon hands by the elders" (signifying the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the blessing of God through the Church's witness, and connecting with the great cloud of witness) were representatives of the Presbytery acting as an administrative commission: Moderator Tim Parmentier (CRE, Trinity-San Jose), Stated Clerk Erica Rader, EP Neal Presa, Libby Boatwright (Past Moderator, member at large), Bill Lane (Gonzales), Andy Rausch (Northminster-Salinas, Past Moderator), and Lynn Viale (Past Moderator).

A special musical offering, featuring a Christian hymn sung in Japanese, was provided by Jason's family and church members. Click [here](#) to listen

We celebrate Jason's ministry, the witness of Lincoln Avenue Presbyterian Church, and the faithful of the living God!



**REGISTER! Presbytery Meeting (in-person only)**  
**Saturday, February 7, 9:00am**  
**Trinity Presbyterian Church-San José**

This is an official business meeting of the Presbytery. Please register [at this link](#). Please indicate if you will join us for lunch.

The docket for the meeting will be posted at the Presbytery website when it is available and ready. We will gather for worship with Communion and install our Presbytery Moderator-elect CRE Tim Parmentier, approve the COM recommendation to charter the First Thai Presbyterian Fellowship as an official congregation, examine Steve Fainer and Cory Piña to certify each of them ready to receive a call, hear a report from the Stated Clerk Search Committee, celebrate the ministries of our outgoing Stated Clerk and Accountant, consider reports from various committees, and so much more!



**Save the Date! Thursday, March 26 at 6:00pm**  
**NEAR Gathering 3 hosts:**  
**General Assembly Co-Moderator Cece Armstrong**

Our third NEAR Gathering will be Thursday, March 26 at Westminster Presbyterian Church, San José, where we will welcome The Rev. Cece Armstrong, Co-Moderator of the 226th General Assembly (2024-26).

This will be a time for worship, dinner fellowship, and to hear the dynamic preaching and wise insights from one of our General Assembly co-moderators.

We are hosting this event, with participation from the Presbytery of San Joaquin, and in partnership with the Presbyteries of North Central California, San Francisco, and Redwoods, all of which are hosting events March 24 and 25.

Early registration is at [this link](#)

*NEAR is an in-person gathering of the members, friends, and guests of the Presbytery of San José held twice a year (Winter/Spring and Autumn) for Nurturing our faith, Equipping for ministry, Advocating for justice, Resourcing for support. This is done through worship, food fellowship, networking, learning, reflection, conversations, and prayer. NEAR 1 was at First Presbyterian Church-Monterey. NEAR 2 was at First Presbyterian Church-Palo Alto.*

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### Presbytery Unity Candle

**Sunday, January 18:**

**First Presbyterian Church, Santa Clara**

This coming Sunday, January 18, please pray for the members of First Presbyterian Church in Santa Clara, their pastor The Rev. Dennis Woodsmall, and their CRE candidate Christopher Sahgal.

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara was formed in 1958, breaking ground in 1959. The church has seen many changes in the world, in the local community, and

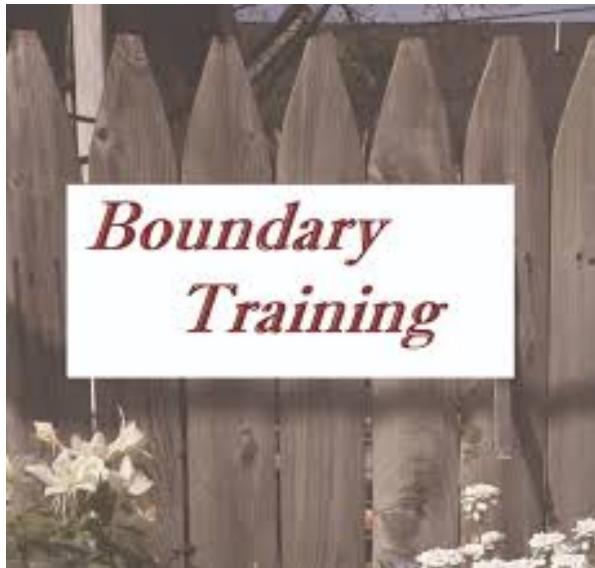
within the organization over the last several decades. Throughout these chapters, they have remained committed to the Lordship of Christ and His restorative ministry. They are a warm, loving, Christ-centered, Bible-based Church community of members who are actively engaged in service, good stewardship, and personal growth to be free, whole, and intimate with God. (from [reachingthevalley.org/about-us](http://reachingthevalley.org/about-us))

Weekly worship is on Sunday at 10:00am in the sanctuary and via YouTube and Zoom.

For more information about First Presbyterian Church-Santa Clara, visit their website at [this link](#)

Follow the path of the Unity Candle: <http://tinyurl.com/SJUnity2025>

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### **Announcing Dates for Required Boundary Trainings**

The Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow (member at-large) will again facilitate required Boundary Training for ruling elders and teaching elders on Saturday, April 18 and Saturday, November 7.

The pattern for both days are:

9:00am-10:00 | Online for ruling elders  
10:00-11:00 | Break  
11:00-1:00pm | In-Person for teaching elders (with lunch included)

Registration information is forthcoming.

Boundary training is mandatory, required by the Book of Order (G-3.0106), focusing on sexual misconduct, harassment, and child abuse prevention for clergy, session members, and church leaders to maintain safe, healthy ministry relationships. This training, usually every three years, covers professional conduct, technology use, and clear roles

For other online options using our Presbytery account with "Darkness to Light," which can be used anytime, contact EP Neal Presa or Stated Clerk Erica Rader.

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## FREE CHAMBER CONCERT AT FIRST PRESBYTERIAN MOUNTAIN VIEW

First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View invites all to the chamber concert "**Dreams**" by [Music for Food](#) on **Jan. 18** at **4PM** in the Sanctuary. Doors open at 3:45PM. This concert is in support of **Second Harvest** and those facing food insecurity in our local community. **Donations encouraged!**

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# Gathered in Faith: Empowering Hearts, Changing Lives

2026 Winter Gathering of Asian Presbyterian Women, Northern California Chapter  
"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Matt 18:20

Saturday Jan 31  
2026



**REV. RUTH KUO 10:30 – 11:45**  
Reclaiming Who I Am. Offering Here I Am.

Pastor Ruth's morning workshop on 'Empowering the hearts,' will begin with sharing her story. She will empower participants to reflect and share their own stories and gifts/callings. Then on offering who they are to God's mission and ministries.



**REV. DEBORAH LEE 1:00 – 2:30**  
On Immigration and Accompaniment

Rev. Lee, ordained in the United Church of Christ, is the Executive Director of Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity, which has made recent news. She is an engaging preacher and speaker on immigration, human rights, and the role of faith communities in social justice.



**9:30 REGISTRATION & COFFEE**  
Westhope Church  
12850 Saratoga Ave. Saratoga  
Large parking lot,  
Close to Highway 85.  
**9:45 INTRODUCTIONS**  
**9:50 OPENING PRAYER AND HYMN**



**11:45 – 12:45 LUNCH**  
from Dim Sum King, Sunnyvale  
a chance to visit and walk the grounds  
**12:45 REGATHER**



Registration ends Jan 24

**2:30 CLOSING AND EVALUATION**  
**3:00 END**

Registration Link: <https://tinyurl.com/GatheredinFaith-Jan31>

apwnoca@gmail.com

[www.sanjosepby.org](http://www.sanjosepby.org)

[View as Webpage](#)

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