



Presbytery of San José

January 24, 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.

Below is the update and follow-up of my Special Call to Prayer and Action earlier this week regarding Mathias and our solidarity accompaniment of him as he faced ICE officials in downtown San Francisco. Please read about our journey with him, the outcome, and what lies ahead for him. Continue to hold him in prayer.

This week also brought many faith leaders together in Minneapolis, in San Francisco, and in other places, bringing the public witness of our faith and of our common humanity in protest against the violent actions of masked ICE agents and the policies that enables them to wreak havoc and fear in the hearts and lives of many.

I want to share with you the sentiment of righteous indignation of my longtime friend, mentor, and colleague, Rev. Dr. Mark Labberton (president emeritus of Fuller Theological Seminary), who shared the following today. Mark was with our Presbytery last September 2025 as our guest preacher/keynote conversation partner at NEAR Gathering 2 at First Presbyterian Church, Mountain View. Here's what Mark wrote:

ALERT: Yesterday's vivid solidarity in Minneapolis against ICE's vicious brutality is now further intensified by its next murder this morning. This kind of specialized terrorism perpetrated by our government is morally horrific and degrading to the actual victims, and to our nation at large. Law and order, including a comprehensive immigration reform policy and practice, has a legitimate and important place in our national life. ICE is NOT that. It is the opposite of that. Join resistance efforts in your location. Pursue justice, mercy, and peace. Protect the most vulnerable. Don't be silent or cowered by fear. Be strong and courageous in the merciful name of Jesus Christ. (see his post at: [this link](#))

In Joy and Justice,
Neal

Rev. Neal D. Presa, Ph.D, Executive Presbyter
(408) 763-5004 | Neal@sanjosepby.org

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

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
- February 7, 2026: Presbytery Meeting at Trinity Presbyterian Church-San José

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 or call/text (408) 763-5004



Being a Connectional Church Embodying Justice and Love

The incarnational witness of the Church at work.

This past Thursday, January 22nd, Presbytery of San Jose teaching elders Rev. Trevor Van Laar, Rev. Vicki Flower Minerva of Gilroy Presbyterian Church, EP Neal Presa, and members of the congregation accompanied Mathias, an asylum seeker from Cameroon, to the ICE field office at 630 Sansome Street in downtown San Francisco.

Mathias came to the U.S. legally in 2022 and awaited for a court hearing. In the meantime he did his annual check-in appointments with ICE. He waited and checked the immigration computer system and suddenly May 2025, the computer system indicated his case was dismissed without any pre-notification nor a reason. He was in limbo until Dec 2025 when the computer system indicated he was to appear on January 22, 2026 at the ICE detention center in downtown San Francisco. His attorney and he feared he would be detained, and subsequently deported.

Gilroy Presbyterian Church members joined together in prayer and donated well over \$20K toward his legal defense.

The notorious 630 Sansome Street Building, known in U.S. immigration history as the second Angel Island where many immigrants were detained and during the Chinese Exclusion Act, many Chinese/Chinese Americans were detained in this building.

The group from the Presbytery stood in line for four hours and when Mathias and his attorney finally went inside, the Presbytery group waited outside and sang hymns and fellowshiped. Mathias and other Cameroonian members in the group were members of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. EP Presa learned that Mama Odilia Ndze, who is visiting here from Cameroon, was a member of the PCC's Synod executive committee so they chatted about polity and the happenings in Cameroon.

EP Presa met his former seminary classmate Rev. Ben Daniel, who serves as co-moderator of Presbytery of San Francisco and pastor of Montclair Presbyterian Church and who formerly was a pastor in San Jose Presbytery. Ben's presence connected our Presbytery group with our siblings of San Francisco Presbytery. Ben came to join our Presbytery group, as he also participated in a faith leaders' gathering at the City Hall of San Francisco where Rev. Bruce Reyes-Chow addressed the crowd; Bruce is on the board of the Interfaith Movement for Human Dignity, which organized that gathering.

After waiting for nearly an hour and a half, Mathias appeared with joy and everyone hugged and huddled together.

Mathias was granted a six month extension and will receive a scheduled hearing with the immigration court, a hearing that he awaited for nearly four years.

Thanks be to God! Let us continue praying for Mathias, for the scheduling of the court hearing, that he will be granted asylum, for his family in Cameroon, and for all persons in the U.S. and around the world who are seeking asylum and who live in vulnerability and fear.

ICYMI: 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 started this past Wednesday, January 21, and spent yesterday (Friday, January 23) in a whole day of orientation meetings and lunch with EP Neal Presa.



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

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

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 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

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 1/2 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.



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

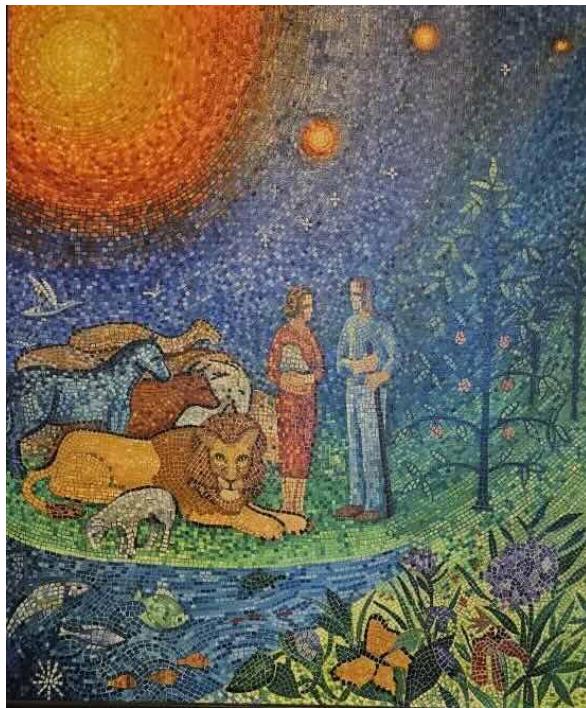


Hello, my name is Veronica Ota and I'm honored to serve as your new Peacemaking and Justice Advocate! I grew up in Pasadena, CA, studied Japanese culture at Tufts University and received my MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary. I am passionate about education. I've taught middle school math and choir in public schools; developed a Peace Camp program at First Presbyterian Church, Altadena (my home church); and lead

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.

trying new coffee spots. I look forward to getting to know you all.

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!



2026 Lent-Easter Devotional Booklet

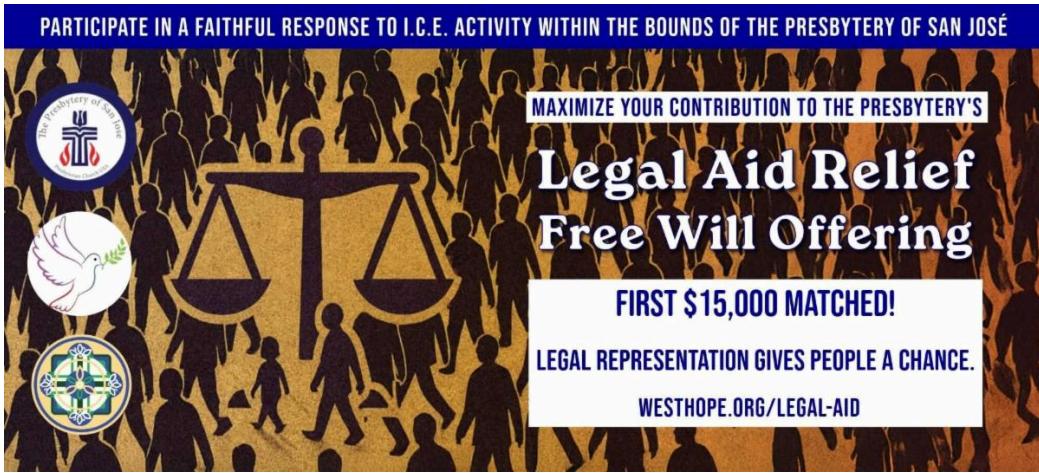
We will soon begin the sacred Lenten season from February 18th through Easter Sunday on April 5.

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



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
 - 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) 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

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



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](#)

This event is free. Your per capita and mission dollars at work through the Anne Penke Fund of the Synod of the Pacific.

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.



Presbytery Unity Candle
Sunday, January 25:
Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church

Tomorrow (Sunday, January 25), please pray for the members and Session of Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church and their pastors: Rev. Hardy Kim and Rev.

Annanda Barclay, and their candidate for ordination under care Aben Das.

With their theme, "Rooted in Christ, Reaching out in love," Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church lives out and embodies the following vision through worship, education, social action, community engagement, mission engagement in the nation and around the world:

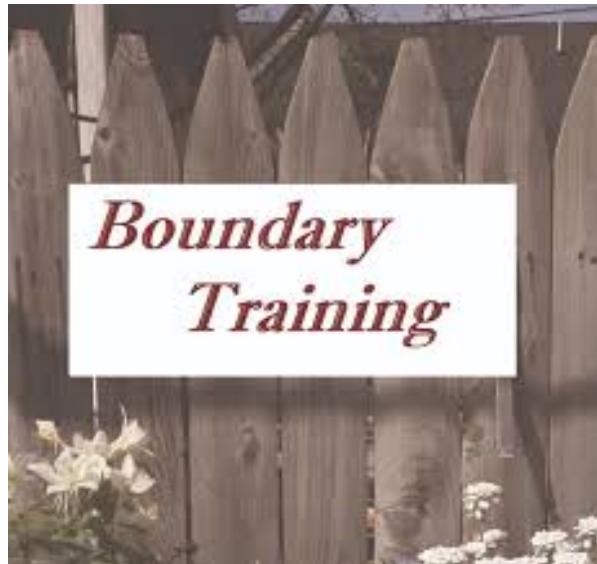
Our vision is to be a growing church that is spiritually alive to God and actively caring for others. This vision sets us on a journey, calling us:

- To worship Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.
- To respond to the needs of people through caring ministries of healing & hope
- To celebrate our diversity of perspective while affirming our unity in Christ.
- And, through the Holy Spirit, to grow in our discovery of God and our mission in the world

Sunday worship is at 10:00am in-person at the sanctuary and on-line via YouTube, with Communion celebrated every first Sunday of the month. In addition, every 2nd and 4th Sundays at 5:00pm, there is Modern Worship Collective at the fellowship hall with dinner afterward. Every 3rd Wednesday at 7:00pm in the sanctuary is an Evensong contemplative worship service.

For more information about Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church, visit their website [at this link](#).

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



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) held at the Presbytery Office/Cornerstone Church of Silicon Valley chapel at 890 Meridian Avenue in San José

Registration information is forthcoming and is free. Your per capita and mission dollars at work.

This boundary training addresses maintaining safe and healthy ministry relationships, with such topics as power dynamics, financial boundaries, social media, pastoral care and counseling relationships, self-care and well-being.

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

To complete boundary training to address sexual misconduct, harassment, and child abuse prevention, you may utilize the Presbytery account with "Darkness to Light," which can be used anytime, contact EP Neal Presa or Stated Clerk Erica Rader.

Note, both sets of boundary training are required: (1) Addressing safe and healthy ministry relationships and (2) Addressing sexual misconduct, harassment, and child abuse prevention. While both sets are, of course, interrelated, there are distinct foci that are addressed and which all teaching and ruling elders are required to learn and engage.



Training for Treasurers and Finance Chairs on May 2nd!

Our Presbytery Treasurer, Rev. Edd Breeden, will facilitate an annual workshop that covers the fundamentals of serving as a church treasurer, a finance chair or on a church finance committee. The workshop will be held in-person on Saturday, May 2 from 9:30am-12:00pm at the chapel of the Presbytery Office/Cornerstone Church of Silicon Valley at 890 Meridian Way in San José.

Registration will be forthcoming. The event is free. Your per capita and mission dollars at work.

For more information, contact by email Edd@sanjosepby.org or (831) 239-6817

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

[View as Webpage](#)

Presbytery of San Jose | 890 Meridian Way | San Jose, CA 95126 US

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