



# Presbytery of San José

## January 30, 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. For this week's Digest, Colin Richardson, our new Communications Coordinator, has a word for you:

Warm Greetings to You all,

As the season of Lent draws near, we are invited into a slower and more thoughtful time. Lent gives us space to pause, to take stock of our lives, and to consider how we are showing up for one another and for the world around us. It is a season that encourages honesty—about what we carry, what we need to let go of, and where we might be called to grow with renewed intention, care, and compassion.

This year, we enter Lent while so much around us feels heavy. Across the country, communities are grappling with fear, violence, and deep uncertainty. In moments like these, it can be tempting to turn away or grow numb. Instead, we are reminded—echoing the words referenced by our Executive Presbyter last week—that we are called to pursue justice, mercy, and peace; to protect those who are most vulnerable; and to resist fear with courage and love. These are not abstract ideas, but daily choices about how we listen, how we speak, and how we stand with our neighbors.

As we move through the weeks ahead, may the Lenten Season draw us closer to what truly matters: caring for one another, remaining rooted in hope, and choosing compassion even when the path forward feels unclear. May we find strength in community, wisdom in reflection, and courage to live out the values we hold dear—with gentleness, humility, and faithfulness.

In Joy and Justice,  
Neal

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

#CalledToCommunity  
#CommittedToJustice

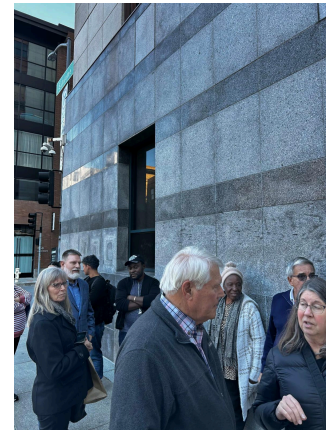
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### Upcoming Travels/Preaching of our Executive Presbyter

- 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@sanjosephby.org](mailto:Neal@sanjosephby.org) or call/text (408) 763-5004*



## Being a Connectional Church Embodying Justice and Love

The incarnational witness of the Church at work.

On Thursday, January 22nd, Presbytery of San Jose teaching elders Rev. Trevor Van Laar, Elder 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 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. He and his attorney 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 after a four-year-long wait.

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.



### **Employment Opportunities Update**

Are you or someone you know being called to serve in the Presbytery or in one of our churches?

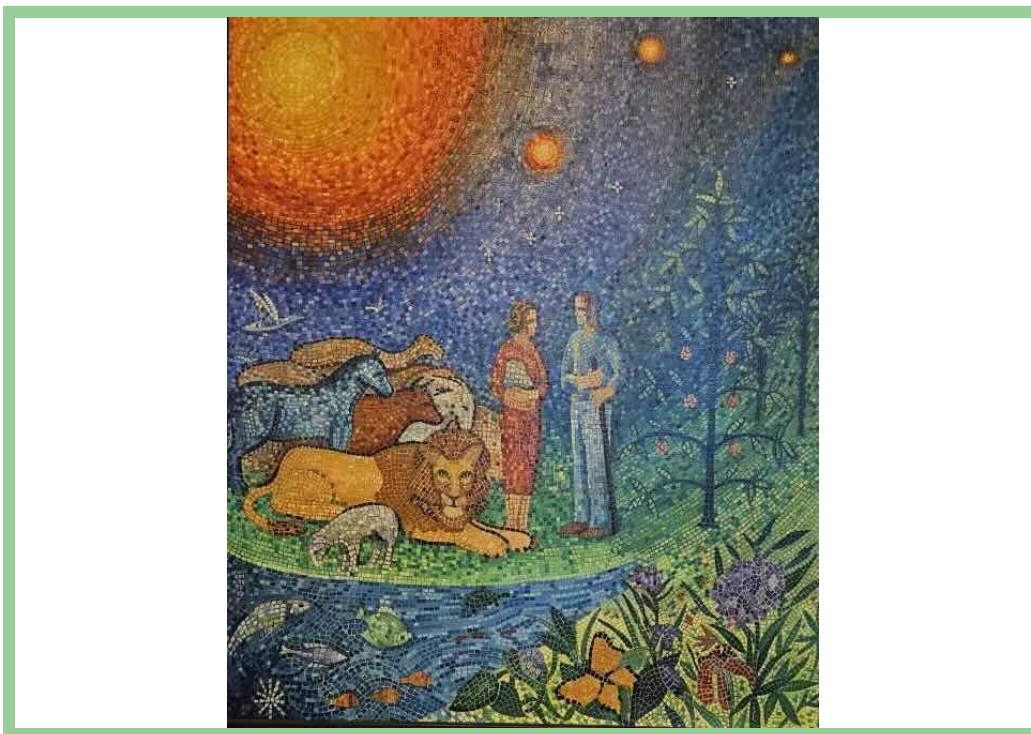
The Presbytery invites prayers and attention to Gilroy Presbyterian Church as they seek to fill a new position within their ministry life:

- **Family Ministry Director**

To learn more about this employment opportunity and others, please [click here](#).

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### 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.

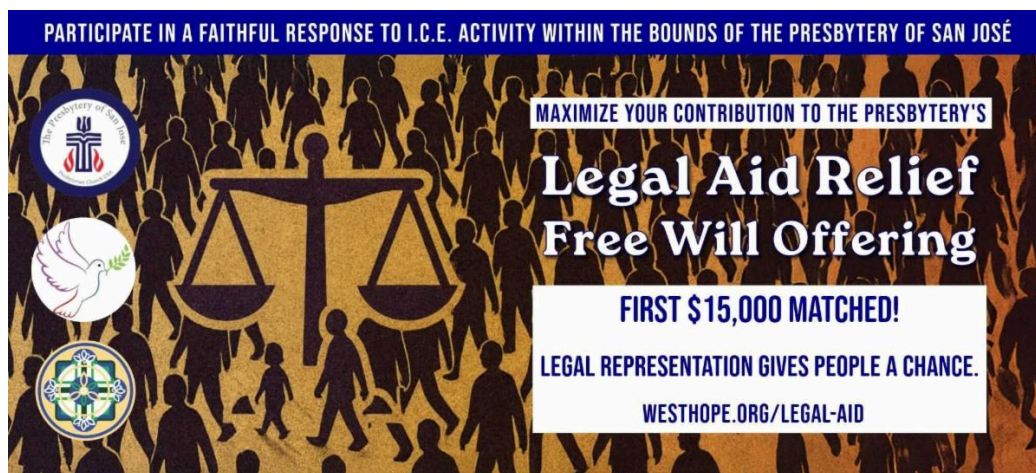
You may sign up at [this link](#).

Please submit your 250-word piece by **February 9th**. To do so:

You may upload your contribution at [this link](#),  
or email it directly to [Neal@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Neal@sanjosepby.org) or [Colin@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Colin@sanjosepby.org) (Please include your congregation/ role in the Presbytery, as well as the date or Scripture(s) you have chosen.)

For reference, revisit the 2025 Easter Devotional at [this link](#)

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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))



**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 this meeting is now available on the Presbytery's website and can be viewed [at this link](#).

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 to certify him ready to receive a call, examine Cory Piña for ordination to 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!

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**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.*

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**Presbytery Unity Candle**  
**Sunday, February 1st:**  
**Daesung Presbyterian Church**

This Sunday (February 1st), please pray for the members and Session of **Daesung Presbyterian Church in Sunnyvale**, along with their pastor, The Rev. Dr. Taejin Hahn, who also serves as moderator of the National Council of Korean Presbyterian Churches (NCKPC).

Guided by their vision of "Experiencing and practicing God's Kingdom in our lives," Daesung Presbyterian Church seeks to live out its mission faithfully in worship, study, and service. Their mission affirms that:

- They worship and meet God in God's Word.
- They stand as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- They transform the world by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Through these commitments, the congregation nurtures spiritual growth, discipleship, and engagement with God's work in the world.

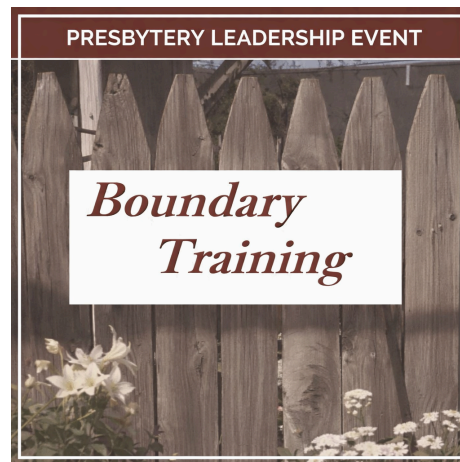
Daesung Presbyterian Church offers a rich rhythm of worship and study throughout the week. Korean worship and Bible study are held on Sundays at 11:00 a.m. in the main chapel, while English worship gathers on Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the small chapel. Apostolic Bible studies are held according to each apostolic society's schedule, and an English Adult Bible Study meets Fridays at 6:00 p.m. via Zoom. Friday services are held on the first and third Fridays of each month at 11:00 a.m. in the main sanctuary, and QT sharing takes place on Mondays at 11:00 a.m.

Through Word, worship, and community, Daesung Presbyterian Church continues to seek and practice God's Kingdom in daily life.

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

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

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### **Upcoming 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 for these trainings will be made available shortly.

*Registration 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.

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**Training for Treasurers and Finance Chairs  
May 2nd, 9:30am-12:00pm**

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.

Register Early at [this link](#).

*The event is free. Your per capita and mission dollars at work.*

This training offers an opportunity to strengthen financial leadership within congregations by reviewing current developments in church finance and reinforcing core responsibilities of church treasurers and finance committees. Designed to be both practical and informative, the session is open and beneficial to pastors, church treasurers, elders, and finance committee members throughout the presbytery.

For more information, contact by email [Edd@sanjosephby.org](mailto:Edd@sanjosephby.org) or (831) 239-6817

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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



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



**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.



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



**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.



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](#)

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

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