



Presbytery of San José

February 13, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Grace and peace to you in the midst of our life together as the Church. For this week's Digest, Colin Richardson, our Communications Coordinator, offers the following reflection:

On February 7, we gathered for our Called Presbytery Meeting—an occasion shaped by worship, discernment, and a deep awareness of the times in which we serve. There was a steady spirit of unity in the room, a reminder that even amid complexity, we remain bound together in Christ's call.

In worship, we were drawn into Jesus' words from the cross: "I thirst." Our own Rev. Neal Presa reflected on how this thirst reaches far beyond physical need, serving as a longing for compassion and justice that is whole and undivided. He cautioned that justice which speaks for some while overlooking others cannot truly satisfy. Advocacy that ignores the most vulnerable only deepens the ache. As he proclaimed, "Because the thirst for justice, for righting the wrong, for repairing the brokenness were never quenched." Those words settled deeply among us—a call to resist partial measures and instead seek a justice broad enough to hold every neighbor.

The following day, within our Presbytery's reach, a global stage carried a different yet deeply resonant witness. During the Super Bowl halftime performance, Puerto Rican musician Bad Bunny led a vibrant display of music, dance, and cultural pride, lifting up immigrant communities who in recent months have faced increased scrutiny and threats to their safety as a result of detention efforts. Across the screens flashed a simple truth: "The only thing more powerful than hate is love." In a moment watched around the world, culture itself testified to dignity, belonging, and shared humanity.

Such public affirmations do not replace the long work of justice, but they remind us that love still has a voice—and that it travels. For those who fear for their safety or question whether they are seen, these displays can feel like cool water. And for those of us called to stand alongside them, they deepen our holy thirst—strengthening our resolve to embody in daily life the love we proclaim in worship.

A fuller account of the meeting's actions can be found below. As we move forward into the season of Lent, may we remain attentive to Christ's thirst—seeking not fleeting gestures, but a justice and love expansive enough to refresh the whole body.

A copy of Neal's sermon from the February 7th Meeting can be viewed [here](#).

In Joy and Justice,
Neal

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

Upcoming Travels/Preaching of our Executive Presbyter

- February 21, 2026: *(if the way be clear)* Commissioning of Elder Wayne Shen as CRE, El Estero Presbyterian Church-Monterey, 11:00 am-12:00 pm
- March 1, 2026: Preaching at First Presbyterian Church-Mountain View, 10:00 am
- March 2-5, 2026: Study Leave - Center for Pastor Theologians at Oak Park, Illinois
- April 12, 2026: Preaching at Taiwanese American Presbyterian Church of San José, 10:00 am

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





ICYMI: February 7th Called Presbytery Meeting Highlights & Takeaways

On Saturday, February 7, the Presbytery gathered at Trinity Presbyterian Church in San Jose for its bi-annual Called Presbytery Meeting marked by worship, meaningful decisions, and plenty of celebration. In a season when being together in the same room feels especially significant, the sanctuary was full. Commissioners and clergy were joined by friends and family who came to support loved ones stepping into new roles. There was a steady sense throughout the day that what was happening mattered—not just administratively, but spiritually—for the future of our shared ministry.

Moderator Tim Parmentier guided the Presbytery through a full agenda and several important milestones with clarity and warmth. Executive Presbyter Neal Presa opened the day in worship and offered a poignant sermon that set a thoughtful and faithful tone for the proceedings. His words grounded us before we moved into the work ahead.

A highlight of the morning was the examination of those preparing for ordained ministry. The Presbytery celebrated the successful certification of **Steve Fainer** of the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos as a candidate for ordination. We also rejoiced in the successful examination of **Cory Piña** of the Presbyterian Church of Monterey for ordination as Minister of Word and Sacrament. The room responded with heartfelt applause, and there were more than a few proud smiles from family and friends in the pews. These moments reflected both careful discernment and deep joy as the Church recognized God's call taking shape in real lives.

The Presbytery also elected **Grace Kaori Suzuki** as our new Stated Clerk. The vote was met with strong support and appreciation for the gifts she brings to this important role. As she steps into this new season of leadership, we do so with confidence and gratitude for her willingness to serve.

Another major milestone came with the chartering of the First Thai Fellowship as a congregation of the Presbytery of San Jose. The decision was received with genuine celebration. It is not every day that we officially welcome a new worshipping community into our Presbytery family. The body also elected the congregation's inaugural ruling elders: **Kris Jueseekul**, **Kit Chatsinchai**, and **Wichayut (Victor) Suttabongoch**. Surrounded by supporters, these leaders were affirmed with prayer and encouragement. The moment felt hopeful and forward-looking, a clear sign that new expressions of faith are taking root among us.

The gathering also made space to say thank you. We honored the faithful service of outgoing Stated Clerk Erica Rader and Presbytery Accountant Diane Case. Their steady leadership and careful work have shaped the Presbytery in lasting ways.

From worship and shared meals to thoughtful decisions and joyful embraces, February 7 reminded us why gathering in person matters. It strengthened relationships, clarified our shared calling, and pointed us toward the future with hope.

For those unable to attend or wanting to revisit Neal's sermon from the event, you can find a copy [here](#).



**Welcoming New Commissioned Ruling Elders:
Dr. Wayne Shen & Chrystopher Sahgal**

The Committee on Ministry has recently approved two new Commissioned Ruling Elders (CRE) to serve within our Presbytery: Dr. Wayne Shen of El Estero Presbyterian Church and Chrystopher Sahgal of First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara (left to right). We celebrate this important step in their ministry and give thanks for their faithful response to God's call.

Dr. Wayne Shen will be commissioned on Saturday, February 21 at 11:00 a.m. at El Estero Presbyterian Church.

Chrystopher Sahgal will be commissioned on Thursday, March 26 during the NEAR Gathering at Westminster Presbyterian Church, San Jose.

Please join us in prayer and encouragement as Wayne and Chrys are commissioned to serve. We look ahead with gratitude as they take on a new role of governance within their ministries.



Employment Opportunities February 2026

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

The Presbytery invited prayers and attention as it seeks to fill a new staff position within the Presbytery:

- **Accountant (New Listing)**

The Presbytery invites prayers and attention to the following congregations as they seek to fill ministry positions:

Gilroy Presbyterian Church

- **Family Ministry Director**

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara

- **Nursery / Childcare Worker**

To learn more about these employment opportunities and the process to apply, please [click here](#).

A banner with a dark blue background at the top containing the text "PARTICIPATE IN A FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO I.C.E. ACTIVITY WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF SAN JOSÉ". Below this is a large image of a crowd of people in silhouette, with a central figure holding a scale of justice. On the left side of the banner are three circular logos: the top one is the Presbytery of San José logo, the middle one is a white dove, and the bottom one is a green and white logo. On the right side, there is a white box with the text "MAXIMIZE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRESBYTERY'S" in blue, followed by "Legal Aid Relief Free Will Offering" in large white font, "FIRST \$15,000 MATCHED!" in blue, "LEGAL REPRESENTATION GIVES PEOPLE A CHANCE." in blue, and "WESTHOPE.ORG/LEGAL-AID" in blue at the bottom.

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.

Fundraising Updates:

Thanks to the generosity of our congregations and partners, this initiative has continued to surpass expectations! As of February 10th, over **\$28,500** has been raised from **117 donors**. This remarkable outpouring of generosity reflects the shared commitment across our community to invest in meaningful, lasting impact.

The Presbytery has also committed up to \$7,500 in matching funds to the Santa Cruz Community Action Board, with the Peace and Justice Working Group gathering updated fundraising information in hopes of reaching their goal.

We give thanks for the compassion and commitment shown across our Presbytery, and we encourage continued support through May 24, 2026, as we work together to uphold dignity, justice, and mercy for our immigrant neighbors.

How To Contribute:

- **Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County (cabinc.org)**
Priority for Matching Funds

1. Please check "SCCIP-IMMIGRATION LEGAL SERVICES—Presbytery of San José Donor"
2. Cash dropped off at 406 Main Street to 2nd floor reception
3. Checks sent to 406 Main Street Ste 207, Watsonville, CA 95016
4. Stock Donation: Please email CFO directly lorettaz@cabinc.org

- **Amigos de Guadalupe Rapid Response Network Legal Services of Santa Clara County amigoscenter.org**

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

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)



**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 available 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, and 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-Mountain View.



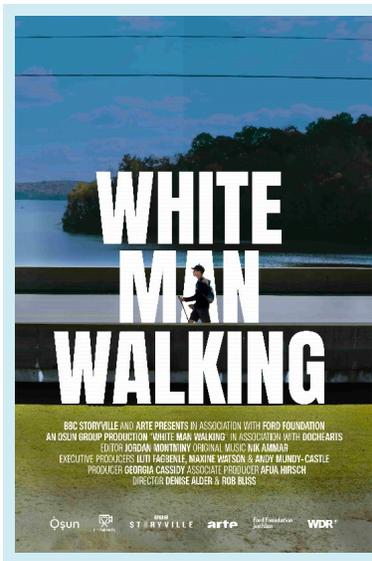
ICYMI: Clergy Winter Retreat 2026

At the end of last month, fifteen pastors of the Presbytery gathered for three days and two nights at the scenic Villa Maria Del Mar retreat center in Santa Cruz. The Winter retreat's theme was "Rediscovering Joy" based on Psalm 51 and John 15, with the common book reading being *Worship, Justice, and Joy: A Liturgical Pilgrimage* by EP Neal Presa.

Through morning and evening prayer services (with the musical accompaniment of Rev. Diane Ford, Trinity-Santa Cruz), small group and plenary discussions, fellowship, and quiet times, the group explored what it means to live and embody joy in the struggles of life, ministry, and the work for justice. They learned from the insights of Wes Granberg Michaelson's book, *The Soulwork for Justice* and the four obstacles of the soul: self-sufficiency, grandiosity, certainty, and control. The antidotes to those are belonging, authenticity, connection, and trust, respectively.

The retreat closed with a celebration of the Lord's Table, followed by some pastors whom Rev. Ryan Althaus (Sweaty Sheep) and his project partner, Capt. Takoda Fletcher, accompanied onboard Salty Sheep catamaran, a ministry of the Presbytery docked at and sailed around Santa Cruz harbor. Others who remained at Villa Maria engaged together in a Lenten Preaching Collaborative.

The next clergy retreat will be October 28-29 at St. Francis Retreat Center at San Juan Bautista. Save the date!

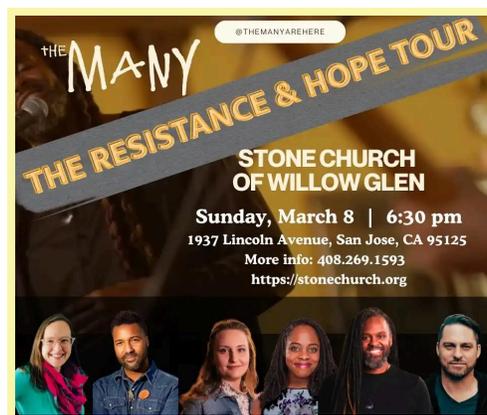


**Congregation Event Spotlight
Westhope's Third Thursday Film Night
February 19, 6:30 pm**

In observance of Black History Month, Westhope Presbyterian Church invites the community to its Third Thursday Social Justice Film Night on February 19 at 6:30 p.m. (doors open at 6:00). February's theme is Anti-Racism, creating space for reflection, learning, and faithful conversation around justice and equity.

The evening will feature a screening of *White Man Walking*, followed by a facilitated discussion focused on allyship within the Black Lives Matter movement. Together, participants will explore what it means to listen deeply, act responsibly, and live out commitments to justice in their communities.

Admission is free and all are welcome to attend. To reserve your spot and learn more about the event, visit the [link here](#).



**Congregation Event Spotlight
Stone Church of Willow Glen Presents:
The Resistance & Hope Tour
Sunday, March 8, 6:30 p.m.**

Stone Church of Willow Glen invites the community to an evening with The Many on Sunday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. at 1937 Lincoln Avenue in San Jose. As part of The Resistance & Hope Tour, the gathering will center on music, justice, and shared faith.

The Many is an intentionally diverse collective creating music meant to be sung together—songs of peace, belonging, and hope for a more just world. Through music and storytelling, the evening will offer space for reflection and encouragement in challenging times, reminding participants that courage and love are cultivated in community.

All are welcome to attend. For more information, call 408.269.1593 or visit the [link here](#).



Presbytery Unity Candle
Sunday, February 15th:
Covenant Presbyterian Church

This Sunday, please pray for our next Unity Candle recipient, Covenant Presbyterian Church, along with their beloved pastor, Rev. Jack Cabaness.

Rooted in Jesus' call to "Feed my sheep," Covenant Presbyterian Church understands its shared life as both nourishment and calling. Fed by joy in worship and fellowship, the congregation seeks to grow in faithfulness, energy, and spirituality—welcoming newcomers, caring for one another, cherishing diverse gifts, and reaching out in generous and loving ministry to do God's work in the world.

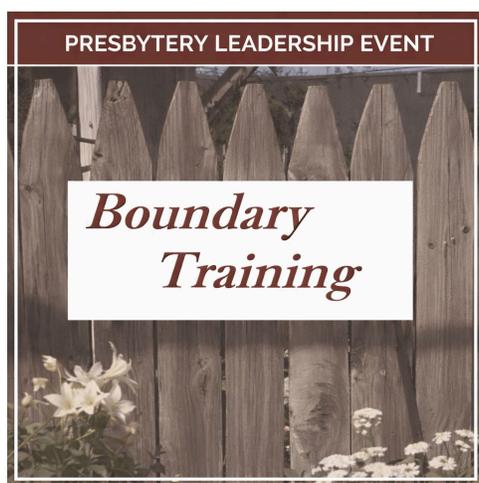
For more than 70 years, Covenant Presbyterian has contributed faithfully to the San Jose Presbytery and to the broader community. Members have served in leadership roles within the Presbytery, including as moderators, and the congregation has been a strong supporter of shared mission initiatives—especially in the area of outreach and service. Their long-standing commitment reflects a church deeply invested in both local ministry and connectional partnership.

Covenant's life together is shaped by three pillars: Joyful Worship, Loving Relationships, and Meaningful Service. The congregation gathers for worship each Sunday at 10:30 a.m., followed by Youth Connection from 12:15–1:15 p.m., which offers prayer, Bible discussion, and meaningful check-ins. Covenant's youth also engage the wider church through conferences and mission travel, including recent ventures abroad to Alaska, Guatemala, and more.

Opportunities for growth and fellowship continue throughout the week. Adult Education classes are often held on Sundays at 12:15 p.m., and Presbyterian Women's Circles gather monthly (second Tuesdays, afternoon in person and evening on Zoom). A Book Club meets on the third Tuesday of each month on Zoom, and the Men's Breakfast Group gathers on Saturdays at 9:00 a.m., both in person and online. Choir rehearsals and other seasonal gatherings further enrich the community's shared worship and service.

For more information about Covenant Presbyterian Church and its upcoming events/programs, visit their website at the [link here](#).

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



Important Training Reminder: Required Boundary Training for Elders

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 is available now at [this link](#).

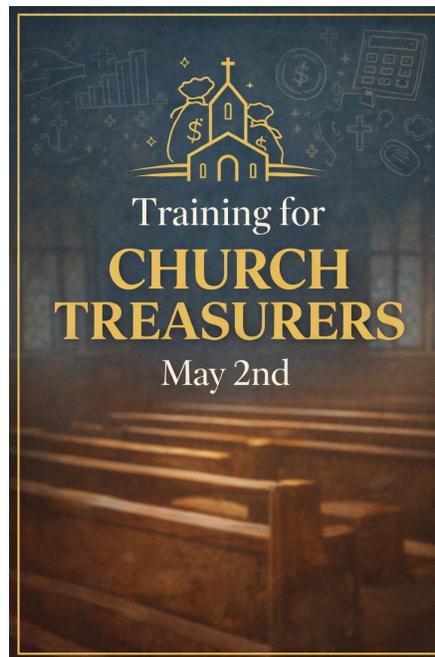
Registration is free. Your per capita and mission dollars at work.

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.



**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@sanjosepby.org or (831) 239-6817

www.sanjosepby.org

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