



Presbytery of San José

April 17th, 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.
*This week's reflection is once again offered by Colin Richardson, our
Communications Coordinator:*

This past Sunday, at the inaugural service of First Thai Presbyterian Church, the Rev. Neal Presa offered a sermon that has lingered in a quiet but insistent way. He shared a story from his youth—of not quite understanding how music moved from a vinyl record onto a cassette tape. Rather than learning the process, he would simply write the name of the song he hoped to record onto the cassette case, trusting that the label itself might somehow make it so.

Despite its endearing nature, he suggests, this tendency to misattribute appears more consequentially in our faith—particularly in how we understand and claim identity. To call oneself “Christian,” to carry the label, can at times be mistaken for the substance itself.

This is not a new tension, but it feels especially present in our current moment. We see faith invoked as a means of criticism, judgment, or the assertion of moral and ethical superiority. The language of Christianity is used—at times even wielded—without the corresponding posture of humility, compassion, and grace that sits at the heart of Jesus’ teachings.

What does it mean to be formed by the teachings of Christ, rather than simply to reference them?

In many ways, this question offers a fitting point of reflection for the Presbytery as we look ahead to our next NEAR gathering, which will engage the topic of Christian nationalism and the ways this ideology can shape—or distort—how faith is lived. Such a gathering is not simply about naming a concern, but about creating space for deeper discourse: to examine how we live out and embody the beliefs we profess. Ultimately, it is an invitation to value the teachings of Jesus over the comfort of familiar words, and to consider what it means to live them with integrity.

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

- April 16-26: Vacation
- May 2: Officiating Memorial Service of the late Elder Dr. Wilson Tawe, New Jersey
- May 3-8: Mid-Council Leaders Residency Retreat, Maryland
- May 12-13: Keynote Speaker, National Council of Korean Presbyterian Churches, Houston, TX
- May 17: Preach, Stone Church-Willow Glen
- May 23: Ordination of Cory Piña as Minister of Word and Sacrament, 11:00 am, First Presbyterian Church, Monterey
- May 24: Preach, Gonzales Presbyterian Church, 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

In Case You Missed It!



**First Thai Presbyterian Church Celebrates
Inaugural Worship and Charter Signing**

This past Sunday, friends, family, and fellow congregants gathered at Foothill Presbyterian Church to celebrate a landmark moment in our common life: the first official worship service of the First Thai Presbyterian Church of San Jose as a fully chartered ministry of the Presbytery. What began as a fellowship community 26 years ago has now taken its place in the broader Reformed family — a testament to decades of faithfulness and perseverance.

Integrated within the inaugural worship service was the congregation's first congregational meeting, in which charter members approved the church by-laws and elected Ruling Elders Krisama Juseekul, Kit Chatsinchai, and Wichayut "Victor" Suttabongoch. The elders were subsequently ordained and installed, joining Rev. Prasartpong "Paul" Pansuay, who was likewise installed as pastor — each act a formal and joyful marker of all that this congregation has built and all that lies ahead.

The congregants of First Thai also signed the official charter covenant, completing the formal steps of their organization as a chartered church — a Sunday long in the making, and well worth the wait. The gathering concluded with the inaugural meeting of the Session, in which Elder Suttabongoch was elected Clerk of Session and Elder Chatsinchai was officially endorsed as a Commissioned Ruling Elder.

Attendees commemorated the day's milestones by joining together in a Thai feast, which also tied into the celebration of Songkran, the Thai New Year observed this very week. This vibrant and ancient festival carries themes of purification and renewal, expressed through the pouring of scented water as a gesture of blessing, gratitude, and — quite aptly — new beginnings. The Presbytery of San Jose gives thanks to God for this congregation, for their witness across 26 years, and for the journey still ahead.

A recording of the service and celebration is available to view [here](#).

Save the Date!

Upcoming Stated Presbytery Meeting:

Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 5:00 pm (via Zoom)

Elders & Congregants of the Presbytery are once again invited to our upcoming bi-annual Stated Presbytery Meeting — highlighting worship, shared discernment, and the business of our common life together.

Registration & More Info to come. We hope to see you there.

Staff Spotlight



Kirk and his team can be reached at:
Accounting@sanjosepby.org

Hello everyone,

My name is Kirk Nilson, and I am the CEO of Nilson and Associates. I've had the privilege of owning and growing the firm since 2013, focusing on steady, organic growth and building lasting relationships with the clients and communities we serve.

In our role with the Presbytery, our team oversees the bookkeeping and accounting functions, helping ensure everything runs smoothly and efficiently behind the scenes. Outside of work, I'm a husband and father who enjoys spending quality time with my family and finding ways to make life a little more special for my wife. In my free time, I also enjoy golfing, hiking, and fishing.

I'm grateful for the opportunity to be part of this community and look forward to continuing to work together.

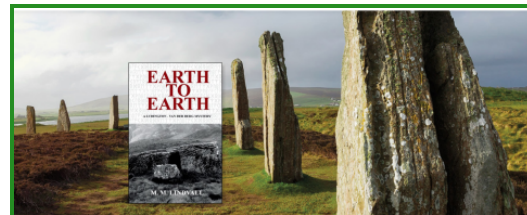
— Kirk Nilson, CEO, Nilson & Associates

Ministry Spotlight



**Earth to Earth
Book Club Event
Presented by PWP San
José**

April 18th, 1:30 pm-4:00 pm



PWP (Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery) San José warmly invites community members to our second-ever Church Mystery Book Club on Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 1:30–4:00 pm at the PCLG Fireside Room (16575 Shannon Road, Los Gatos).

This year's gathering features *Earth to Earth*, the continuing story of a Presbyterian pastor from New York—this time leading visitors on a journey to Scotland. Librarian Rebecca Zisch returns as book club leader, and guiding what promises to be an entertaining afternoon of discussion, discovery, and treats!

Whether you love mysteries, books, or simply good conversation, all are welcome to join us for this lively community gathering.

To RSVP and view more information, visit the link [here](#).

Book Discussion w/

Author Kristin Lee
Hosted by
Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church
April 19th, 10:30 am



Sunnyvale Pres warmly invites you to a special book discussion with Kristin Lee, who will share her brand-new release, ***We Mend with Gold: An Immigrant Daughter's Reckoning with American Christianity***.

Dr. Lee, a Boston-based physician and writer, explores themes of faith, healing, and belonging through the lens of the immigrant Christian experience. Her work weaves memoir with Asian American and other marginalized theological voices, offering honest reflection and a powerful invitation to imagine a more expansive and inclusive church.

All are welcome to attend this book discussion, offered both in person and online. For additional details and to access the Zoom link, please visit the Sunnyvale PC's event page [here](#).

Clergy Reminders

Save the Date!
Fall 2026 Clergy Retreat
October 28th-29th, 2026

A friendly reminder to clergy across the Presbytery of San Jose to save the date for our upcoming Clergy Retreat, taking place October 28–29 at St. Francis Conference Center in San Juan Bautista (one night, two days).

This gathering offers teaching and ruling elders a meaningful time set apart for reflection, fellowship, and shared learning in our ministries and callings.

More information and registration details will be shared soon!

**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.

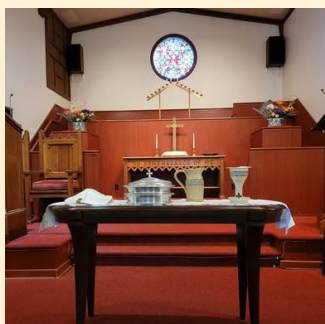
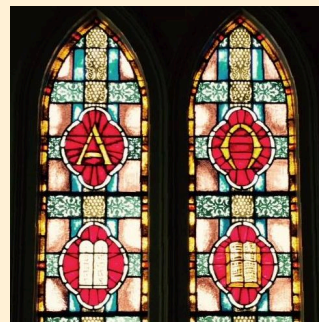
Registration is still open at [this link](#).



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 Edd at: Edd@sanjosephby.org or (831) 239-6817



Presbytery Unity Candle

Week of Sunday, April 19

Gonzales Community Presbyterian Church

This week, we invite you to pray for the ministry of Gonzales Community Presbyterian Church, along with their Pastor, the Rev. Bill Lane, and all who give their time and gifts to sustain its long-standing life of worship and service.

Gonzales Community states its purpose simply and warmly: rooted in the love of God, they strive to spread that love throughout their community. It is a congregation with deep roots in the town of Gonzales itself — traces of its founding stretch back to the 1870s, when the first Sunday School gatherings met in a local schoolhouse not long after the town was laid out. What formally became an organized church in 1883 grew steadily over the following century, eventually becoming a Presbyterian congregation and remaining a place of worship open to all who seek a relationship with Christ.

Sunday morning worship is held at 10 AM, and all are welcome to come and experience the love and grace of God in the company of this historic and faithful community. As Gonzales Community Presbyterian Church continues its presence in worship and in the world, we give thanks for all they offer to those within and beyond their congregation. We ask that you hold Rev. Lane and the entire Gonzales

family in prayer this week — that their ministries may continue to flourish and bear fruit in the year ahead.

Those interested in connecting with the congregation can reach the church directly by phone at (831) 290-5145 or by email at PastorBill@Gonzalescpc.org. For more information about this week's congregation, visit their website at the [link here](#).

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

A Place at the Table

Offerings from Rev. Ryan Althaus,
Hunger Advocate

This column is a space to explore hunger advocacy — both relational and physical — and to spark conversation about how our congregations can better support and carry out meaningful outreach in this area, guided by the work of our newly appointed Presbytery **Hunger Advocate**, the **Rev. Ryan Althaus**.

To start, we firmly encourage all congregations to complete Ryan's brief survey. Your responses will help shape his work going forward and inform how we engage with hunger outreach across our Presbytery together.

[Take Survey Here!](#)



To learn more and stay connected to this work, we invite you to visit **Ryan's website**

CSA Spotlight: Common Roots Farms

Several years ago I joined the Common Root crew and got the farm listed as a national pcusa hunger site. I've hosted a number of our congregations out there and regularly lead tours and such of the farm coupled with lessons on organic food, disabilities & gardening. Every year the farm offers a CSA program as a means of funding the program and sharing some really amazing organic produce and flowers. If congregants want to participate or churches would like to use common roots for their flower needs, let me know, and I can put together a private tour.

CSA Farm shares are still available for the 2026 season, and members of our Community Supported Agriculture program receive a weekly farm share for 24 weeks. Shares begin May 5th and end with the last share on October 16th.

Each week, you'll get a curated selection of in-season produce and flowers — harvested at peak freshness. Crops we are excited about include strawberries, sweet peppers, little gem lettuces, tomatoes, pole beans, summer squash, dahlias, celosia, sunflowers, and more.

Choosing [Common Roots Farm's CSA](#) means more than just fresh, local produce and blooms — it's a direct investment in our inclusive farm where people with disabilities gain skills, jobs, and a sense of belonging. Every farm share supports hands-on training, internships, regenerative stewardship, and community.

— a growing hub of reflections, resources, and updates on ongoing projects happening across our community

For ongoing reflections and resources in the meantime, visit Rev. Althaus's hunger advocacy blog [here](#). or feel free to contact him directly at:
ryan@sanjosephby.org

Pieces on Peace

Veronica Ota, Peacemaking & Justice Advocate



April Edition

For decades, I've seen the Westview "Chimes" newsletter pinned to the bulletin board of First Presbyterian Church, Altadena (FPCA) – the church I grew up attending, where I still work (part-time hybrid) in community outreach, and where I'm under care as a candidate for ministry. I'll be honest, I never read the "Chimes" on the bulletin board, but when my husband and I moved up to Prunedale/Castroville last September, I figured Westview would be a good place to visit since I had some sort of connection.

Westview and FPCA are small, multicultural churches that share a common history as Japanese American churches. While it was exciting and nostalgically heartwarming to see old photos of the Westview congregation that reminded me very much of my home church, what really impressed me about Westview was not their past, but their future. They were in the process of constructing a tiny home community called "HOPE Village" on their campus to serve their neighbors experiencing homelessness.

Westview is small in number, but the decision to partner with Community Action Board (CAB), and the counties of Monterey and Santa Cruz to construct a tiny home community that can help provide housing for up to 34 people at a time is big, giant, herculean, I would even say miraculous! HOPE Village provides more than shelter. CAB has two case managers, a housing navigator, and staff on site daily to provide assistance. They partner with Loaves and Fishes, the Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels, and other groups to help residents access meals and food. They have laundry and cleaning services to help everyone feel comfortable. Westview is working to provide opportunities for spiritual care and fellowship. The hope is that within six months, residents will move on to permanent or longer-term, stable housing. CAB's goal is that 60% of villagers are able to accomplish this. A similar model exists in Santa Barbara and has an 85% success rate. There is much hope for HOPE Village!

While touring the recently completed site, CAB'S homelessness prevention and intervention services director, Mike Kittredge, shared an earnest request for **prayer**. He asked people of faith to pray for HOPE Village and CAB to find continued funding to serve our unhoused neighbors. A more official "grand opening" celebration is in the works, but for now our Presbytery can pray for HOPE Village – for its residents, staff and affiliated groups, and for Westview and their ministry with HOPE Village. I also invite you to join me in praying for more churches to be moved and inspired by this example of a small church doing a great thing to help unhoused neighbors.

To support HOPE Village, check donations can be made out to Community Action Board with memo: HOPE Village (<https://cabinc.org/home-donate-section/>). Donations of clothing and shoes in good condition can also be donated to Westview. Contact Veronica for more information.

If your congregation or community is engaged in a peace- or justice-centered ministry, launching a new initiative, or has a story worth sharing, you can contact Veronica at veronica@sanjosepby.org



Employment Opportunities April 2026

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

First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto

- [Guitarist/ Song Leader](#)

Gilroy Presbyterian Church

- [Family Ministry Director](#)

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara

- [Executive Administrator](#)
- [Nursery / Childcare Worker](#)

Presbytery-affiliated organizations looking to fill positions:

Westminster Woods

- [Interim Executive Director](#) **New Listing*

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

SAVE THE DATE!

4th NEAR Gathering Announced!
Theme: *Christian Nationalism*
w/ Keynote Speakers from Princeton Seminary

The Presbytery is excited to announce plans for the 4th NEAR Gathering, taking place **Saturday, September 26, 2026 (9:00 am to 1:00 pm)**. Location is to be announced.

This year's gathering takes up a pressing and timely theme: Christian Nationalism. The morning will feature two keynote addresses from **Dr. Heath Carter** and **Dr. Hanna Reichel** of Princeton Theological Seminary, followed by small group discussions and an armchair conversation with both speakers moderated by the Executive Presbyter. Drawing on their rigorous scholarship and experience, Drs. Carter and Reichel will offer theological and historical perspectives designed to inform and shape our practical action and prayerful response to Christian Nationalism. Lunch will be provided, along with a light breakfast.

As the Presbytery continues to create space for learning, discernment, and community, the NEAR Gathering remains one of our most vital opportunities to come together across congregations. Additional details, including location and registration information, will be shared in the months ahead.



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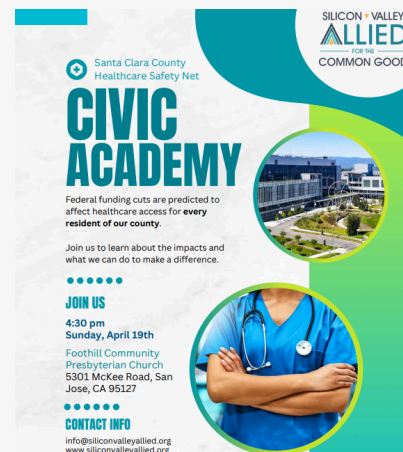
Additional details, including location and registration information, will be shared in the months ahead.

Healthcare Safety Net Civic Academy Org. by SVA for Common Good **Sunday,** **April 19 at 4:30 p.m.**

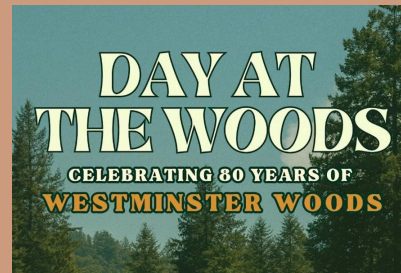
Foothill Community PC invites you all to the Healthcare Safety Net Civic Academy, presented in partnership with Silicon Valley Allied for the Common Good (SVACG) — an alliance of religious institutions and secular non-profits engaged in community organizing across our county.

Join us on Sunday, April 19th at 4:30 PM at Foothill Community Presbyterian Church (5301 McKee Road, San Jose, CA 95127) for a panel discussion. Together, we will explore the effects of federal funding cuts — including deep cuts to Medi-Cal — on our local community, and discuss what we can do to reinforce and protect our healthcare safety net. These changes are far-reaching, and many in our community may not yet realize the full impact they will have right here in San Jose.

To register, visit the [link here](#). This event is open to everyone, and we warmly welcome all who wish to learn and get involved.



**Day at The Woods
Westminster Woods 80th Anniversary
Saturday, April 25, 2026 | 12–6 pm**



Come celebrate community, the outdoors, and 80 years of Westminster Woods! Set beneath the redwoods in Cazadero, Day at the Woods is a festive, all-ages gathering with something for everyone — a Sherwood Forest-themed faire, hiking trails, crafts, camp games, and live music throughout the day from local bands Late for the Train, Scott Elliot Ferreter, and Frognbog. Food trucks will be on site, along with beverages served by Old Caz and Pax Wines.

More than a party, Day at The Woods is an invitation to slow down and reconnect — with each other, with nature, and with the community that has carried this beloved place for nearly eight decades. Proceeds support Westminster Woods' mission and programs, including Outdoor Education, Summer Camps, and retreats for all ages.

For tickets and more information, visit the link [here](#).

**Mission and Outreach Working
Group Roundtable Gathering
Saturday, June 13 at 11:30 a.m.**



Save the date for a roundtable gathering hosted by the Mission and Outreach Working Group (MAOWG). Mission committee chairpersons and members from across our presbytery are invited to come together for conversation, connection, and encouragement.

Join us for a potluck luncheon and discussion time to share the joys and challenges of mission work within our congregations. It will be an opportunity to learn from one another's experiences and strengthen our shared ministry.

MAOWG also hopes to compile a current list of mission chairpersons and their contact information from each congregation. This will help us communicate about upcoming events, available grant money, and future mission trips.

For more information about the roundtable gathering, or to provide mission chairperson contact information, please reach out to Pam Siu, Chair of the Mission and Outreach Working Group, at thesiufamily@yahoo.com.

**Spiritual Retreat to Taizé, France
Dir. by Tijitske Postma of Westhope PC
June 28 -July 5, 2026**

Members of the Presbytery are invited to attend a retreat to Taizé, France, hosted by Spiritual Director and Westhope office manager **Tjitske Postma**. Young adults seeking a spiritually immersive experience are invited to join a small group for this one-week experience at the Taizé monastic community, one of the world's most popular sites for Christian pilgrimage.

A pilgrimage of trust to
Taizé, France



Sunday June 28 - Sunday July 5

Join Spiritual Director and Westhope office manager Tjitske Postma on a retreat to this contemplative community.

Participants will begin in Paris on June 28 and travel together to Taizé for a week of reflection, worship, and community life. Tjitske, a certified spiritual director and experienced retreat leader to Taizé, will guide the group throughout the journey.

More details, including pricing and what is included, can be found on the [flyer](#). Space is limited, and sign-ups close April 15.

To learn more or reserve your spot, email: spiritualdirector@tjitskepostma.com

Leaders of Color Retreat Zephyr Point Conference Center October 19-22, 2026

Mark your calendar for the Leaders of Color Retreat 2026, our annual gathering of encouragement and renewal, taking place October 19–22, 2026, at the beautiful Zephyr Point Conference Center.



Set along the peaceful shores of Lake Tahoe, this retreat continues an annual tradition of creating sacred space to strengthen relationships, share wisdom, and sustain one another in ministry through fellowship and reflection.

This event welcomes all clergy of color and church leaders of color within the Presbyteries of San Jose, San Francisco, Redwoods, and North Central California are warmly invited to register and take part in this meaningful time together.

Registration details and additional information will be shared in the months ahead.

PARTICIPATE IN A FAITHFUL RESPONSE TO I.C.E. ACTIVITY WITHIN THE BOUNDS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF SAN JOSÉ

MAXIMIZE YOUR CONTRIBUTION TO THE PRESBYTERY'S

Legal Aid Relief Free Will Offering

FIRST \$15,000 MATCHED!

LEGAL REPRESENTATION GIVES PEOPLE A CHANCE.

WESTHOPE.ORG/LEGAL-AID

Work Group Spotlight:

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 exceed expectations. As of **March 3**, more than **\$30,000** has been raised from over **120+ donors**, unlocking the full \$15,000 in matching funds. The new total includes an additional \$1760 received from the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz since our last Fundraiser update. This remarkable outpouring of generosity reflects the shared commitment across our community to invest in meaningful, lasting impact.

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.

**The Presbytery is currently planning a Ceremonial Check Presentation to highlight these organizations' work in partnership with the Peace and Justice Working Group. Event Info will be shared in the weeks to come!*

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.com)**

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)

www.sanjosepby.org

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