



# Presbytery of San José

## April 24th, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

For this week's reflection, our new Stated Clerk offers a message:

Hello everyone – my name is Grace Kaori Suzuki, your new Stated Clerk! I am honored to do ministry with and among you in the Presbytery of San José.

As I write this reflection, I see signs of spring all around me (even in the craziness of climate change, thankfully). There are fresh green leaves on the trees out of the window of my new office space (i.e., a room in my house); I hear birds singing in the trees, and hummingbirds that visit my window from time to time. It is befitting that we call this time of year Eastertide in 'church-lingo' – the season when we continue to celebrate Jesus' resurrection and the power of our God that continuously brings new life.

Over the past months in the presbytery, there has been 'newness' that has sprung forth. When I interviewed for my position, I was told multiple times that this position would add to the 'next chapter' in the life of the presbytery. Although some of our staff have been serving the presbytery for longer, in addition to my position, we have a new Communication Coordinator (Colin), a new Peacemaking and Justice Advocate (Veronica), and a new accountant/bookkeeper (Kirk). In addition, one of the first things I did in my position was to worship at First Thai Presbyterian Church for its first service as a newly chartered congregation. Not discounting any of what came before – because it is on those things that we stand, with gratitude – it seems that there is a sense of 'newness' for our presbytery, similar to what springtime brings.

I look forward to seeing what God has in store for our presbytery – and hope to participate in that work of ministry as faithfully as I am able. I also look forward to meeting all of you and your churches/ministries so that I may serve you in ways that are helpful. And I am very excited for us to work together in bringing God's 'newness' to fruition for our presbytery!

Serving together in Christ,

Grace Kaori (or Grace)

Rev. Dr. Grace Kaori Suzuki (she/her)  
Stated Clerk  
Presbytery of San José

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

## 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)** at Gilroy Presbyterian Church.

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.

The graphic is a vertical poster for the 4th NEAR Gathering. It features a dark blue background with a gold cross at the top. The text is white and gold. The title '4th NEAR Gathering' is prominent. Below it, the theme 'Christian Nationalism' is written in a gold script font. The date and time 'Saturday, September 26, 2026' are listed, along with the location 'Gilroy Presbyterian Church - 6000 Miller Ave, Gilroy, CA'. At the bottom, two circular portraits of the speakers, Dr. Heath Carter and Dr. Hanna Reichel, are shown with their names and titles below them.

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.

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.

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

## Staff Spotlight: Welcoming Our New Stated Clerk



The Presbytery is delighted to welcome the **Rev. Dr. Grace Kaori Suzuki** as our new Stated Clerk, officially elected at our called meeting on February 7th of this year.

Grace brings more than 20 years of ministry experience to this role, having served as pastor and head of staff at Christ United Presbyterian Church in San Francisco. She holds a Doctor of Ministry from San Francisco Theological Seminary, with an emphasis on executive leadership. We welcome her with gratitude and blessings for the work ahead.

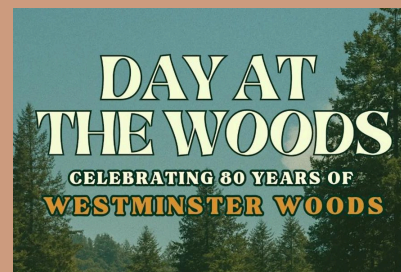
For questions or matters related to the Stated Clerk, you can contact Grace at:  
[gracekaori@sanjosephy.org](mailto:gracekaori@sanjosephy.org)

## Ministry Spotlight



### 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 Frogbog. 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.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### 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. Sandwiches and beverages will be provided. Attendees are welcome (but not required) to bring a salad, chips, or dessert to share.

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.

Please **RSVP** to **Pam Siu** (Chair of the Mission and Outreach Working Group) by June 1 with the name(s) of those attending from your church. You can also contact Pam for more information or to provide mission chairperson's contact information here: [thesiufamily@yahoo.com](mailto:thesiufamily@yahoo.com).

### Annual Justice Conference Zephyr Point Conference Center May 11-14, 2026 Registration Closes Soon!

Church Leaders are invited to gather once again for the 2026 Justice Conference, taking place May 11–14, 2026, at the beautiful Zephyr Point Conference Center along the shores of Lake Tahoe.

This year's theme, "**The Work of Advocacy: Humble, Kind, and Just**," is rooted in the prophetic call of Micah 6:8—to walk humbly, love kindly, and pursue justice. Over four days of reflection, formation, and courageous conversation, participants will explore how faithful communities can engage in advocacy with integrity, compassion, and courage in a polarized world. Together, we will learn about the injustices facing our world and discover spiritually-grounded, tangible tools for engagement in our own local communities.



We are honored to welcome keynote speaker **Dr. Miguel De La Torre**, a renowned scholar and activist whose work centers on liberation, decolonizing faith, and justice for marginalized communities.

Pastors, church leaders, and individuals serving on committees dedicated to justice, compassion, mission, and outreach are warmly invited to join us. If your heart is with justice, come and be inspired to fan the flames of the work you envision in your church, community, and beyond.

**Registration** closes at the end of the month! To register & learn more about the event, visit Zephyr's website [here](#).

### **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.



## ***Clergy Reminders***

### **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@sanjosepby.org](mailto:Edd@sanjosepby.org) or (831) 239-6817

## **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.

## **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!

## ***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 is available to view [here](#). More photos from the event can be viewed on the Presbytery's Facebook [here](#).



## *Presbytery Unity Candle: Week of Sunday, April 26*

### **Northminster Presbyterian Church**

This week, we invite you to pray for the ministry of Northminster Presbyterian Church, along with their Pastor, the **Rev. Andy Rausch**, and all who give their time and gifts to sustain its faithful life of worship and service within the Salinas Community.

Northminster Presbyterian Church describes itself simply and warmly as a close-knit community devoted to "Caring for ALL with God's Love and Grace." Rooted in the Gospel and shaped by a spirit of welcome, the congregation strives to live as Christ-followers and seekers whose faith takes shape in everyday life. They are a

multi-generational community of families, empty-nesters, and retirees who understand their calling as one of service — both to one another and to the wider Salinas community. Since its founding in 1959, Northminster has grown into the church home it is today at 315 E. Alvin Drive, where worship, fellowship, and ministry continue side by side.

Sunday morning worship is held at 10 AM in the sanctuary, with the service also livestreamed each week. Adult Sunday School gathers at 9 AM, and the congregation offers children's and youth ministries, small groups, and music programs throughout the week (visit their website for the full schedule of offerings). Northminster's commitment to the wider community runs deep: members volunteer with the Salinas Warming Shelter and Relay for Life, and bimonthly, the congregation prepares and serves home-cooked potluck meals for residents of the Salinas SHARE Center. The church also operates a daycare and a preschool/Kinderprep program.

Pastor Andy Rausch is a Salinas native who, after teaching school in southern Monterey County, attended Princeton Theological Seminary and went on to serve congregations in Iowa and San Anselmo before returning home to Northminster. He brings a warm heart for people of all ages and a particular gift for ministry with youth and children.

As Northminster Presbyterian Church continues its witness in worship and in the world, we give thanks for all they offer to those within and beyond their congregation. For more information about this week's congregation, weekly schedules, and ways to get involved, visit their website [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!](#)

## 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.

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@sanjosepby.org](mailto:ryan@sanjosepby.org)

To learn more and stay connected to this work, we invite you to visit [Ryan's website](#) — a growing hub of reflections, resources, and updates on ongoing projects happening across our community

## ***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@sanjosephby.org](mailto:veronica@sanjosephby.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](#)

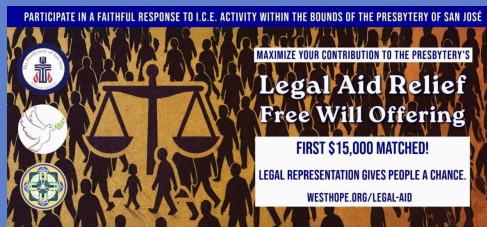
Presbytery-affiliated organizations looking to fill positions:

### **Westminster Woods**

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

To learn more about these opportunities and the process to apply, visit the Presbytery's Employment page [here](#).

# Work Group Spotlight: Legal Aid Initiative



## ***One Month Remaining!***

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 more than **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](http://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](mailto:lorettaz@cabinc.org)

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

1. Click in the drop-down menu underneath "My donation is for\*" and select "Presbytery of San José Donor - RRR 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](http://www.sanjosepby.org)

[View as Webpage](#)

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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email & social marketing for free!