



Presbytery of San José

May 15th, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Greetings in the love of God, the joy of Christ, and the peace of the Holy Spirit.

Yesterday (Thursday, May 14) marked the day of the Ascension of the Lord, 40 days after Easter, which means 10 days from Ascension Day is Pentecost Sunday (May 24).

In Christ's ascension to heaven in his seating at the right hand of God, the Spirit of the Lord comes, who unites us to Christ, to the communion of God's people in every time and in every place, teaching us the will and ways of Christ, imparting and sealing the life of Christ in us. In Christ's ascension, we live in and with the freedom and mystery of the triune God. In Christ's ascension, we see our present-future destiny: being in the very present presence of the heart and life of the triune community of the living God.

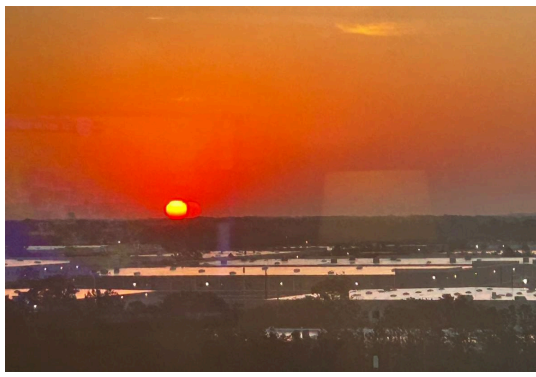
The promise and power of the Lord's ascension enables us to live and serve in the both/and duality of certainty and mystery. We are certain that God is love, but we figure out every single day what that may mean and how that will unfold - from the strangers we have yet to meet, to the ways we may be called to bless someone that is unplanned and unscheduled. We live in the certainty of our death at some point, and, at the same time, in the mystery of what our today and tomorrow will be like. We can't exist totally in one or the other. If we lived with total certainty 100% of the time, then there would be no need for faith. If we lived with 100% mystery, we'd live in despair, uncertainty, and constant anxiety. Instead, the Lord grants to us both at the same time. It's what enables Christians through the ages to confess that our ascended Lord is 100% present and 100% absent: Christ is here with us because where the Spirit is, Christ is. At the same time, Christ is physically absent from us; the testimony of his disciples are true and trustworthy - they truly saw him ascend to the heavens (Acts 1:9; Luke 24:50-51). So that while we join the New Testament writers in saying "The Lord be with you" and we respond "And with your spirit" or "And also with you," we are saying to one another that Christ's presence is mediated to us by the power and presence of His Spirit, even as that same Spirit connects us to the ascended Christ.

Such a promise keeps us prayerful and humble because this means we don't have all the answers. We know a whole lot of things; we also don't know a whole lot of things. On what we do know — God is love, the world is broken, the world is beautiful, I'm Neal Presa and still a work in progress - we can act upon. And the many things we don't know, we constantly and consistently rely upon the wisdom, grace, and mercy of Christ and the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit. And here's one more magnificent promise of the reality of Christ's ascension and Pentecost: Christ continues to intercede for us in prayer as our High Priest and Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 4:14-16), praying with us and for us. He accomplishes this with the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to pray, who gives us words to pray, who teaches us to pray, who reminds us to pray.

After all, the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the Father are the Three-in-One, the One-in-Three. One Team, One Community, and we get to be a part of it all.

Thanks be to God!

*Photo by Rev. Neal Presa, taken earlier
this week.*



In Joy & Justice,

Neal

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

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

Upcoming Travels & Preaching

May 12-13: Keynote Speaker, National Council of Korean Presbyterian Churches — Houston, TX

May 17: Preach — Stone Church-Willow Glen

May 18: HOPE Village Inauguration & Ribbon-Cutting, 1:00 pm — Westview Presbyterian Church, Watsonville

May 23: Ordination of Cory Piña as Minister of Word and Sacrament, 11:00 am— First Presbyterian Church, Monterey

May 24: Preach, 10:00 am — Gonzales Presbyterian Church

May 26: Immanuel House Board (at Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos)

May 27: Checks Presentation to Amigos de Guadalupe and Community Action Board — Westhope Presbyterian Church-Saratoga

June 2-6: Auburn Theological Seminary Board of Directors (Juneau, Alaska)

June 7: Preach/Officiate Lord's Table — Bonny Doon Presbyterian Church (10:00 am)

June 8-12: World Council of Churches Executive Committee — via Zoom online

June 21: Preach, 10:30 am - Foothill Community Presbyterian Church — San José

June 25: Pastors Roundtable filming video on Artificial Intelligence and Faith — Menlo Park Church; sponsored by the University of Notre Dame, the Bay Area Center for Faith, Work & Tech, the Center for Ethical Intelligence, Transforming the Bay for Christ

June 27 - July 2: 227th General Assembly (Milwaukee, WI)

4th NEAR Gathering + Save the Date



The Presbytery is excited to announce the 4th NEAR Gathering, taking place Saturday, September 26, 2026 (9:00 am–1:00 pm) at Gilroy Presbyterian Church.

This year's theme is **Christian Nationalism**. The morning will feature 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 scholarship, Drs. Carter and Reichel will offer theological and historical perspectives to shape our practical action and prayerful response to this topic. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. Registration details will be shared in the weeks ahead.

As the Presbytery continues to create space for learning, discernment, and community, the NEAR Gathering (*Nurture, Educate, Advocate, Resource*) remains one of our most vital opportunities to come together across congregations.

Ministry Spotlight

HOPE Village Grand Opening Westview Presbyterian Church Site Monday, May 18 at 1:00 pm



Next week marks the culmination of a years-long collaborative effort to serve our unhoused neighbors in the Watsonville community — an effort our presbytery has been part of

through the leadership of Westview Presbyterian Church. HOPE Village, a 24-hour, 34-bed, non-congregate, low-barrier navigation center at 118 First Street, will officially open its doors next week, offering housing-focused case management and wraparound services to guide participants toward stable, sustainable housing. Members of the presbytery are warmly invited to attend the celebration.

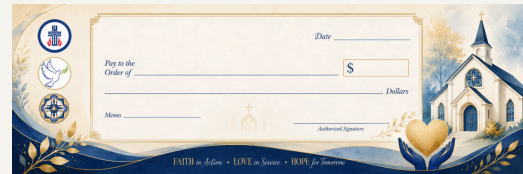
The project was initiated, funded, and facilitated by Monterey and Santa Cruz Counties in partnership with the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County (CAB), and made possible in no small part by Rev. Dan Hoffman and the leadership of Westview Presbyterian Church, who have been working on the housing project since its inception in Watsonville. Community Action Board - a consistent partner to the Presbytery of San Jose - brings decades of commitment to social justice in our surrounding counties, with plans to implement culturally responsive programs for the new development that include on-site staffing, housing navigation, workforce development, and community reintegration.

Dan Hoffman recently spoke to the inaugural residents at HOPE's site, describing them as "beaming with joy and gratitude" as a result of their newfound stability. In the days to come, please hold the organizers and residents in your prayers.

To RSVP for the grand opening celebration, [visit here](#). To learn more about HOPE Village, visit their [site here](#).

❖ LEGAL AID INITIATIVE

**Save the Date:
Ceremonial Check Presentation
Westhope Presbyterian Church
May 27th, 12:00 pm**



With over \$15,000 raised, our contributors have successfully secured matching funds pledged by the Peace and Justice Working Group. To honor the organizations that made this possible, the Presbytery will present ceremonial checks to Amigos de Guadalupe and the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County—each in the amount of \$7,500—following the fundraiser deadline on Pentecost Sunday, May 24.

Join us on **Wednesday, May 27, at 12:00 pm at Westhope Presbyterian Church in Saratoga**. The presentation will feature representatives from each organization for a brief program of remarks and acknowledgement of their collective efforts to support our immigrant neighbors.

Last Chance to Donate!

Initiative ends on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, 2026

\$30,000+
raised so far

120+
donors

\$15,000
matching funds unlocked

According to a 2025 report by the American Immigration Council, without legal representation at immigration court proceedings, people in our Presbytery face a 70% chance of being deported — often erroneously.

How to Contribute



Amigos de Guadalupe

Providing legal support and advocacy for immigrant communities in Santa Clara County through the Rapid Response Network.

Give to Amigos de Guadalupe

✦ Visit the link & select "Presbytery of San José Donor – RRN Legal Services / Family Support" to direct your gift



Community Action Board of Santa Cruz

Connecting immigrants in Santa Cruz County with legal counsel and direct advocacy to ensure fair representation in court.

Give to Community Action Board

✦ Visit the link & select "Presbytery of San José Donor - SCCIP – Immigration Legal Services" to direct your gift.

More ways to donate to CAB:

- Mail a check to: 406 Main Street, Suite 207, Watsonville, CA 95016
- Drop off cash at their 406 Main Street office (2nd floor reception)
- For stock donations, contact CAB's CFO directly at lorettaz@cabinc.org

For questions about the initiative or more ways to give, contact any of the following: EP Neal Presa (neal@sanjosepby.org), 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).

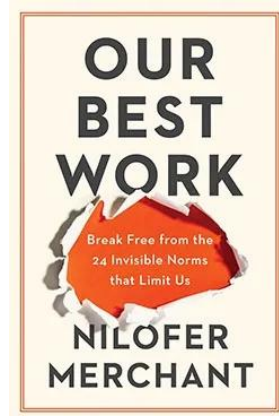
Save the Date!

Conversation for Pastors & Faith Leaders: Hosted by Rev. Dave Watermulder of PCLG Wednesday, May 20th, at 11:00am

Join us on May 20th for a conversation with Nilofer Merchant about leadership in church and faith settings, based on her new book *Our Best Work*. Nilofer is a marketplace thought leader, author, and speaker. She is a member of the Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos and has served as an Elder. This is a chance to learn more about collaborative leadership, overcoming self-imposed obstacles, and growing into a person who draws others into decision making where it matters most.

This event will be hosted by Pastor Dave Watermulder, and everyone who attends will receive a free copy of the book! The program will be held in the Fireside Room of PCLG on May 20th at 11am, with coffee and treats starting at 10:30am.

To **RSVP** or receive more information, contact: veronica.nourse@pclg.org. Read about Nilofer here and join us as we learn and grow together! <https://nilofermerchant.com/>



Third Thursday Film Night: *The Voice of Hind Rajab*
Westhope Presbyterian Church
Thursday, May 21 at 6:00 pm

Westhope Presbyterian Church warmly invites members and friends to an evening of meaningful film and reflection. Each month, Westhope's Third Thursday Film series gathers the community around stories of Social Justice in hopes of sparking meaningful conversation. This month's selection is *The Voice of Hind Rajab*, nominated for Best International Feature Film at this year's Academy Awards. Read a synopsis below:

On January 29, 2024, Red Crescent volunteers received an emergency call. A five-year-old girl was trapped in a car under fire in Gaza, pleading for rescue. As they worked to dispatch an ambulance, they did everything they could to keep her on the line. Her name was Hind Rajab.

Doors open at 6:00 p.m., and the film begins at 6:30 p.m. at Westhope Presbyterian Church. All are welcome. To register and find more information, visit their [website here](#).



Faith Leaders & LGBTQ+ Summit
Presented by Silicon Valley Faith Collective
& Qmunity Foundation
Wednesday, June 10 at 8:30 a.m.

Save the date for a half-day summit bringing together faith leaders, clergy, spiritual leaders, LGBTQ+ community leaders, and affirming organizations from across Silicon Valley. All parties are warmly invited to participate in a morning of listening and relationship-building at the intersection of faith and LGBTQ+ inclusion. The summit will be held at the Signia Hotel in San Jose from 8:30 am to 12:00 pm.



Presented by the Silicon Valley Faith Collaborative and the Qmunity Foundation, this gathering will create space for dialogue and shared discernment across faith traditions. Attendees can expect to hear stories from faith leaders, engage with perspectives from leaders in equity, health, and community wellbeing, and learn about local resources available throughout the region.

Confirmed participating organizations include the Qmunity Foundation, the Santa Clara County Office of LGBTQ Affairs, the Santa Clara County Division of Equity, The Q Corner, The Gender Health Center, the Billy DeFrank LGBTQ+ Community Center, and the Bill Wilson Center.

For more information or to RSVP, please visit svfaith.org/faith-leaders-and-lgbtq-summit.html. Donations to help cover event costs can be made at gofund.me/04f5b698a.

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.

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 and additional information will be shared in July.



Clergy Reminders

Teaching Elders: Share Your Milestone Dates

All Teaching Elders — whether serving in an installed position, member at-large, honorably retired - we are a community of presbyters. One way to do that is to be aware of one another's life milestones and celebrate them.

Please fill out [this form](#) (also found below) and share any of the following: ordination date, birthday, wedding anniversary, or retirement date. While some of this information is in our database profile listings for you, not everyone has it. We'd like to have an updated list, and this will give me an opportunity to connect with you as those sacred dates approach.

Blessings,
EP Neal Presa

[Share Your Milestones Here](#)

Stated Presbytery Meeting: Thursday, November 5, 2026 at 5:00 pm

Elders & members 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.

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!



Unity Candle □

WEEK OF MAY 17TH

Gilroy Presbyterian Church

Gilroy

This week, we invite you to pray for the ministry of Gilroy Presbyterian Church- along with their pastoral leadership- the Rev. Trevor Van Laar, Katie Van Horn (Director of Family Ministry), and all the Elders and Deacons who give their time and ministry to lead Gilroy's congregants.

Their congregation hosts a vibrant community shaped by four guiding values: love, worship, serve, and share. They strive to be known for their love of God, of one another, of their community, and of the wider world — committed to creating open doors and extending grace to everyone who joins them.

Rooted in the conviction that Scripture should inspire practical application, Gilroy Presbyterian seeks to live out the gospel every day through faithful worship, transformational relationships, and tangible service. Their ministry extends throughout Gilroy in partnership with St. Joseph's Family Center, the Gilroy Compassion Center, and the Ochoa winter housing program — targeting the basic needs of their most vulnerable neighbors.

Gilroy Presbyterian gathers for in-person worship on Sunday mornings from 10:00 to 11:00 AM, offered virtually as well. Additionally, the congregation offers a robust slate of youth and family ministries, including Kids for Christ, JAM and Amplify youth groups, and their annual GPC Summer Day Camp.

Please hold Pastor Van Laar and the entire Gilroy Presbyterian Church family in prayer this week — that their ministry may continue to flourish and sustain their countless acts of service throughout the liturgical year.

To learn more about this week's congregation, you can visit their website here:

<https://www.gilroypres.org/>

Follow the path of the Unity Candle here:

<http://tinyurl.com/SJUnity2025>

Veronica Ota · Peacemaking & Justice Advocate

“Social Justice” can be a tricky subject, especially for churches. As “Peacemaking and Justice Advocate,” I’ve seen how my job title elicits varied responses. For some, my role evokes excitement and a desire to connect, for others; there is wariness and skepticism about any agenda I might be pushing. I believe a major part of my job is to help our church leaders, members, and communities understand that the Church is already involved in the work of restorative justice and peacemaking, as we are under Christ’s leadership and seek to proclaim, as Jesus did, good news to the poor, freedom for prisoners, sight for the blind, and liberation for the oppressed (Luke 4:18). Our political leanings may cause disagreements on how to work towards these ends, but our faith should nonetheless make these concerns central to our lives.

A meeting with Rev. Andy Wong of Foothill Community Presbyterian Church helped affirm how community organizing and social justice work align with the gospel message and vision. Pastors Andy and Lindsay and some members of FCPC are actively involved with [Silicon Valley Allied for the Common Good](#), a “non-partisan network of civic associations, faith-based organizations and nonprofits that come together to effect change... [and] help regular people have a seat at the decision-making tables of Silicon Valley.” The emphasis of this group is building relationships through one-on-one meetings. Through the ongoing process of getting to know one another, our stories reveal our concerns and passions, as well as our wisdom and strength. Empowered relationally, we can then work together effectively to address problems in our communities.

When Andy is questioned about how this kind of grassroots organizing fits into “church,” he explains that community organizing is about three things: relationships, leaders, and power. When we build relationships, we value and validate each other’s life experiences. In this way, new leaders are empowered to emerge, recognizing the importance of their story and the power they hold to be part of the change they desire to see. When networks of empowered everyday leaders strengthen, we have the power to effect meaningful change. As Andy put it, “What church doesn’t want to build relationships, leaders, and power?”

Jesus commands us to be in loving relationship with God and neighbor, and empowers us to be leaders in the Church, the body of Christ, sharing the good news of Christ’s redemptive love with the world. The gospel envisions a changed world, and Christ offers us the power to pray for and participate in the building of God’s kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Our churches and leaders might not all be called to community organizing, but we can grow our relationships with individuals and groups working to encourage local leaders in order to support the empowerment of all God’s children – and that is the work of peacemaking and justice.

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

Rev. Ryan Althaus · Hunger Advocate

Several years ago I joined the Common Roots 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@sanjosephy.org



Employment Opportunities

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](#)

First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara

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

Presbytery-affiliated organizations looking to fill positions:

Westminster Woods

- [Interim Executive Director](#)

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



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

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