



Presbytery of San José

May 22nd, 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 and Executive Support Associate:

This coming Sunday, the Church celebrates Pentecost — the day we remember the Holy Spirit descending upon the apostles in wind and flame, empowering them to proclaim the risen Christ and carry the gospel into the world. Coming fifty days after Easter, Pentecost marks a meaningful transition in which the joy builds towards a mission of spreading the word.

In Acts 2, the Spirit does not arrive as a private feeling alone, but as a force who creates courage, communication, and community. Those who had gathered in uncertainty are suddenly equipped to bridge the gap of difference to be understood. In this way, Pentecost reminds us that faith is not meant to remain enclosed within worship but to be honed as inspiration to continue on spreading God's word of love.

Pentecost is often remembered as the “birthday of the Church,” but not simply as a historical anniversary. It is a reminder that the Spirit continues to form us into Christ’s faithful disciples — giving us, in the language provided by the Book of Order, “energy, intelligence, imagination, and love” for the work of ministry in the world.

That witness feels especially needed in times where threats from nature and neighbors alike often ambush this work, and deplete our community of its newfound inspiration. Pentecost does not ask us to look away from this reality. Instead, it asks what kind of people the Spirit is making us into within them, and what we choose to do with the tools at our disposal.

As we close the chapter on another season within the church, perhaps Pentecost invites us to ask how resurrection is becoming visible in our daily lives. Where might the Spirit be calling us to listen more deeply, serve more concretely, or encourage someone who feels weary? Allow Sunday to serve as a reminder not that the Spirit came once, but that the Spirit continues to move through us as we attempt to navigate the "ordinary" events of today with extraordinary resilience.

In Joy & Justice,

Neal

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

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

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 — Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos

May 27: Checks Presentation to Amigos de Guadalupe and Community Action Board, 12:00 pm — Westhope Presbyterian Church-Saratoga

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

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

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

June 15th: Thought Leader Panel for engaging Pope Leo XIV's forthcoming encyclical, "Magnificas Humanitas" (Magnificent Humanity), on artificial intelligence, human dignity, and ethics, 6:00-7:15 pm — via Zoom online; sponsored by New College Berkeley

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)

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@sanjosepy.org or call/text (408) 763-5004.

4th NEAR Gathering ♦ Save the Date



The poster features the Presbyterian of San Jose logo at the top. Below it, the text reads "PRESBYTERY OF SAN JOSE" and "4th NEAR Gathering". A gold banner contains the theme "THIS YEAR'S THEME Christian Nationalism". The date "Saturday, September 26, 2026" is listed, along with the time "9:00 AM - 1:00 PM" and the location "Gilroy Presbyterian Church - 6000 Miller Ave, Gilroy, CA". At the bottom, two featured speakers are shown: Dr. Heath Carter, Associate Professor of American Christianity at Princeton Theological Seminary, and Dr. Hanna Reichel, Charles Hodge Professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.

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.

❖ 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 this Sunday, May 24

\$30,000+

raised so far

120+

donors

\$15,000

matching funds unlocked

**Give to Amigos de
Guadalupe**

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

**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 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).

Ministry Spotlight

In Case You Missed It HOPE Takes Root at Westview

This month marked the joyful culmination of a years-long effort to serve unhoused neighbors in the Pajaro Valley. Leaders from across Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties gathered for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of HOPE Village (Housing Opportunity Programs Employment), a 34-unit, low-barrier transitional housing community located on the property of Westview Presbyterian Church in Watsonville. The Presbytery of San Jose staff were grateful to be present alongside Westview, local leaders, and community partners to celebrate the long-awaited milestone.

“What you see here today bears witness to the beautiful miracle of collaboration.”

— Elizabeth Funk, CEO of Dignity Moves

At the heart of HOPE Village is the faithful, persistent leadership of Westview Presbyterian Church and its pastor, Rev. Dan Hoffman. From offering the church’s property as a building site to navigating countless bureaucratic hurdles along the way, Dan — alongside many tireless Westview congregants — has championed this project from its inception. Among those key figures is longtime Westview volunteer Margo Loehr, whose years of dedication to supporting the Watsonville community helped make this vision possible. An inaugural placard outside of HOPE's entryway includes Margo as its only individual dedication, a testament to her impact on the project's fruition. What now stands on Westview’s property is not only housing but a testimony to collaborative discipleship for its broader community.

The opening also reflected the strength of a wide network of partners, including Roxanne Wilson, County Homeless Services Director for the County of Monterey; MariaElena De La Garza, Executive Director of the Community Action Board of Santa Cruz County, along with representatives from Dignity Moves and Community Action Board. As Elizabeth Funk, CEO of DignityMoves, reflected during the celebration, “What you see here today bears witness to the beautiful miracle of collaboration.”

“What made this project possible is... we let go of our boundaries.”

— Robert Ratner, Director of Housing for Health, Santa Cruz County

HOPE Village will provide wraparound support, including transitional housing for six months or more, food, counseling, social services, employment support, and a safe community with 24/7 security. Its structures, built by LifeArk using recycled high-density polyurethane plastic, also reflect creative stewardship — turning discarded materials into durable, dignified places of shelter and stability. In naming what made such a project possible, Robert Ratner, Housing for Health Partnership Director for the County of Santa Cruz, said simply: “What made this project possible is we let go of our boundaries.”

As the 14th housing community developed by DignityMoves in California, HOPE Village is both a local milestone and part of a broader movement to respond to homelessness with both compassion and practicality. We give thanks for Rev. Dan Hoffman, Margo Loehr, and the entire Westview Presbyterian Church community, whose steady work helped bring this vision to life, and ask for prayers in guiding both the residents and the dedicated staff of this newfound community, as they move toward healing and serve as a beacon of hope to the countless others working toward change on a similar scale.



To read more about HOPE Village and its offerings, visit their [site here](#).

Save the Date!

Sustainability Lunch
First Presbyterian Church - Palo Alto
Sunday, May 24th at 11:30 a.m.

Hi beloved community, First Presbyterian Palo Alto will host our monthly Sustainability Lunch, a plant-based potluck, on Sunday, May 24—yes, Memorial Day weekend—at 11:30 in Fellowship Hall at First Presbyterian Palo Alto, 1140 Cowper St, Palo Alto.

Our guest speaker will be Beth Love, founder and director of Eat for the Earth in Santa Cruz. Beth holds a master's in divinity from the Pacific School of Religion and has also worked as a Families Minister and Systems Coordinator for Inner Light Ministries.

Please bring something to share, along with your own plate and utensils if you remember—but no worries if you forget, as we will have enough. Please see the attached flyer (cred. Alida Cutriss) and share it with your network.

[More on Eat for the Earth](#)

Eat for the Earth launched in Santa Cruz on January 19, 2019, out of our concern for the ongoing habitability of the Earth. As we engage in outreach and education and work with our partners to develop and implement projects, we create models that are replicable in diverse settings. In order to maximize our effectiveness and reach, we provide tools and support for activist groups in other communities to create change in their local areas. We also participate in regional, national, and international coalitions working toward sustainable diets, and give input to broader planning efforts. For example, we are members of the international **Food and Climate Alliance** and we submitted a **policy paper** to the People's Green New Deal Working Group.



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/>

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
Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church
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



Magnifica Humanitas: AI & Human Dignity **Monday, June 15, 2026, 6:00 - 7:00 pm**

A friendly reminder to clergy & laypersons about the upcoming online conversation, “Magnifica Humanitas: AI & Human Dignity,” which will explore Pope Leo XIV’s first encyclical and its timely reflections on artificial intelligence, labor and the workplace, social relationships, and human dignity.

The conversation will feature Dr. César “CJ” Baldelomar, a scholar-teacher and member of the New College Berkeley teaching team, alongside a thoughtful panel including our very own **EP, the Rev. Dr. Neal Presa.**

Also in attendance will be Nicole Dickens, a Generative AI leader based in Silicon Valley, and Dr. Joe Holland, an eco-social philosopher, theologian, and prolific author.

All are warmly invited to join this ecumenical conversation on the ethical and theological questions AI raises for the life and witness of the Church.

Registration is available now. [Visit here.](#)

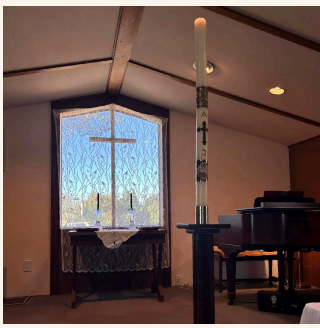
Retired Clergy Lunch Fellowship **Wednesday, September 9, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

A friendly invitation to all Retired Teaching Elders and Clergy across the Presbytery of San Jose to save the date for a first-ever lunch fellowship gathering, taking place on Wednesday, September 9 from 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. at Presbyterian Church Los Gatos.

This special gathering will be co-hosted by the Rev. Jack Longley, HR, Parish Associate at Presbyterian Church Los Gatos, and EP Neal Presa, with grant support from the Church Health & Growth Working Group. Retired clergy are warmly invited to gather for a meaningful time of fellowship, connection and conversation.

Registration details will be shared soon!





Unity Candle □

WEEK OF MAY 24TH

San Martin Presbyterian Church

San Martin

This week, we invite you to pray for the ministry of Presbyterian Church of San Martin alongside their pastor, Rev. Trevor Van Laar, and all those who give their time and ministry to lead this intimate congregation.

The Presbyterian Church of San Martin is a small but deeply rooted community of faith with a long history in the farming community of San Martin. First formed in 1898, the congregation originally gathered in a school on Depot Street before building its church in 1904 at its present site, 13200 Lincoln Ave., on land donated by the wife of its first pastor, the Rev. William Hersman.

Built with volunteer labor, the church has long reflected the dedication and care of the community it serves. Anyone who visits San Martin will see and hear peacocks roaming the grounds, find beloved hand-knit quilts placed on every pew seat, and notice the hitching post at the front of the church, a reminder of the days when worshipers arrived by horse and wagon. Above all else, it is these kinds of historical details that best reflect the intimate history of this congregation. They speak to the care, memory, and faithfulness that continue to sustain the life of the church. That same spirit of service is also seen in one of San Martin's vibrant and longstanding ministries: a community flea market held on the first Saturday of every month, from about 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., which raises approximately \$1,500 in support of the church's ongoing ministry.

Rooted in more than a century of worship, fellowship, and service, the Presbyterian Church of San Martin remains a faithful presence in its community. Please hold Pastor Van Laar and the entire San Martin church family in prayer this week—that their ministry may continue to be sustained, strengthened, and blessed in the seasons ahead.

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

<https://pcusa.org/congregation/san-martin-church-san-martin-ca>

Follow the path of the Unity Candle here:

<http://tinyurl.com/SJUnity2025>

Pieces on Peace ☮

SPECIAL EDITION

Veronica Ota · Peacemaking & Justice Advocate

The Good Growth Garden Project: Growing Food, Growing Community, Growing Love

Westview was the first church I visited after moving to the Monterey area last fall. As a yonsei Japanese American of mixed descent, I was drawn to the church because of its

history, but when I saw HOPE Village under construction, I grew more interested in Westview’s future.

In January, I joined the Presbytery of San José as the Peacemaking and Justice Advocate and connected with Pastor Dan. While showing me around the church, he opened a door in the kitchen that led to an area once used for barbecuing teriyaki chicken. One cinderblock barbecue remained, but the space had been taken over by weeds and a massive aloe. Pastor Dan shared his dream for this space— that it would become a community garden where food could be grown by, with, and for HOPE Village residents, the church, and the neighborhood. The fresh produce could be prepared into healthy meals in the church’s commercial-grade kitchen. The only thing missing was someone to lead the project. *Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send?...” And I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’” (Isaiah 6:8).*

Was it a coincidence that my passion is the intersection of sustainability and spirituality? God’s answers prayers. I received my Master of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary with a certificate in Theology, Ecology, and Spiritual Formation in 2024. During my years at Princeton, I also worked at the seminary’s farm, “The Farminary,” overseeing the compost program. At seminary, I discerned a calling to the ministry of cultivating sustainable communities. Sustainability and community begin in the soil. Pastor Dan invited me to join a new community with the soil behind the church, and with HOPE Village residents, Westview members, friends, and locals interested in organic gardening.

Thus, The Good Growth Garden project began! There was immediate excitement with HOPE Village. HOPE neighbor Roy showed up ready to start working, so we did. Roy and his friend José cleared out all the weeds in one day. The next week, HOPE neighbor Pablo showed up with a rototiller, and he and Allen broke up the weed roots in the ground, reduced the gargantuan aloe, and loaded up the yard waste. Local friend Don Yoshimura brought us over a big truck and had assistants haul it to the dump. A Community Action Board staff member donated tomato plants, a friend of a friend of a friend offered manure. Everyone I have talked to about this project is sincerely supportive. The Spirit is giving life to our garden.

Growing organic food locally and caring for the soil is healing and restorative for all, and it is a way for us to live out our faith in action. All are welcome to help out with The Good Growth Garden, in whatever way you feel God calling you to participate.

[Watch Day 1 Video Here](#)

Good Growth Garden Wish List :

***Financial Donations Appreciated**

(Westview Presbyterian Church memo: Community Garden)

Garden Tools (Used or New)

Wheelbarrow
Garden Rake
Leaf Rake
Shovels
Hand tools
Garden Gloves
Watering Can

Garden Supplies

Organic Garden Soil / Potting Soil
Seeds or Plant Starts
Wood Mulch
Aged Manure
Boot Scrubber

Everything in one place: related content, advocacy resources, and ways to get involved — all on our **[Peacemaking & Justice Advocacy page](#)**, curated by Veronica.

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

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](#).



www.sanjosepby.org

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