

Presbytery of San Jose: Notice of Called Special Meeting
Friday, August 7, 2026 7:00pm
Meeting on Zoom

Link to register and receive Zoom link: https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1iK--28LCSsGXaFFrQ4DW_HeVpr2fghAIRqllWq_5SK8/edit?usp=sharing_eil_se_dm&ts=6a5fe787

7:00 Welcome and Opening Prayer

Moderator, Tim Parmentier, CRE

**7:10 Establishing Quorum
Approval of Agenda**

Rev. Grace Kaori Suzuki, Stated Clerk

Special Meeting not Stated Meeting; Change in the Docket;
Quorum call (8 ministers/8 elders/6 churches); Corresponding Members; First
time attendees; Visitors

7:20 Committee on Ministry

Elder Sharon Rowser

Motion:

1. To validate the ordainable position of Presbytery Peacemaking and Justice Minister (see pp.2-3)
2. To validate the Good Growth Gardens community garden as a new worshipping community (in conjunction with Westview Presbyterian Church-Watsonville) (see pp.2-3)
3. To approve for ordination Ms. Veronica Ota to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and approve her to be installed as Presbytery Peacemaking and Justice Minister (see pp. 4-6)
4. To approve the Terms of Call for the position of Presbytery Peacemaking and Justice Minister (subject to the Board of Pensions approving the grant application for benefits for organizing pastors/evangelists) (see p. 7)

7:45 Financial Affairs Committee

Elder James Lee

Motion:

To approve the request of the Westview Presbyterian Church of Watsonville to sell their manse, and authorizes the Financial Affairs Committee of the Presbytery to guide and oversee the sale transaction of the manse. (see p. 8)

8:00 Prayer and Adjournment

Proposal for New Presbytery Staff Position¹

Title: Peacemaking and Justice Minister

Status: Ordainable, Designated Pastor – three year contract, subject to renewal

Reporting to: Executive Presbyter

Classification: Exempt, half-time, 25hours/week

Terms of Call: \$40,000 effective salary², benefits fully funded by BOP³, \$1500 professional expenses (\$1000 funded by Westview Presbyterian Church), \$1000 continuing education, \$600 cell phone reimbursement; 2026 budget impact (annualized): \$0

Effective: October 1, 2026

This proposed Presbytery staff position promotes our current Peacemaking and Justice Advocate, Ms. Veronica Ota, to this ordainable position. Veronica is presently certified ready to receive a call by the Presbytery of San Gabriel. She is completing contract work with the First Presbyterian Church in Altadena as their worship director (remote work) in July 2026.

This position will be done in conjunction with Westview Presbyterian Church in Watsonville, where Veronica has already started to lead the development of Good Growth Garden, an emerging worshipping community garden with HOPE Village and Westview church volunteers. This position would have Veronica serve 10 hours per week as the organizing pastor/evangelist for the Good Growth Garden, and 15 hours per week resourcing the Presbytery with peacemaking and justice initiatives, preaching in churches, meeting with community groups and leaders. She would join Presbytery staff in supporting our churches, affiliated nonprofit entities, and teaching/ruling elders in our collective call to “do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6:8).

Actions Required:

Personnel Committee	1. Authorize creation of Staff Position	Approved	June 11, 2026
Committee on Ministry	2. Authorize staff position as ordainable position 3. Validate the position and the Good Growth Garden new worshipping community as validated ministries		

¹ Initially Submitted to Presbytery Personnel Committee, Committee on Ministry, Financial Affairs Committee, Coordinating Council by EP Neal D. Presa

² This represents a little more than half of the minimum effective salary for Monterey County, where Veronica Ota resides.

³ <https://www.pensions.org/what-we-offer/benefits-packages/Benefits-grants-for-organizing-pastors-and-evangelists>

	4. Examine Veronica Ota and recommend to Presbytery for ordination to and installation 5. Recommend to Coordinating Council to call a special meeting of the Presbytery in August to approve Veronica Ota for ordination and installation. 6. Approve the Terms of Call for Veronica Ota to serve as Peacemaking and Justice Minister for the Presbytery 7. If the way be clear with Presbytery's action, appoint an administration commission to install Veronica Ota	Approved	July 13, 2026
Financial Affairs Committee	8. Authorize \$20,000 (annualized) in the 2026 budget for the position to begin September 1, 2026 and for the next three years, and recommend to Presbytery. The position will be identified in the budget as 40% towards Good Growth Garden and 60% towards Peacemaking and Justice Minister, with the salary costs of \$40,000 divided accordingly.	Approved	June 17, 2026
Coordinating Council	9. Receive recommendations from Committee on Ministry (items 2-6 above) and Financial Affairs Committee (item 8 above) 10. Call special meeting of Presbytery to enact the above	Approved	July 20, 2026
Presbytery	11. Approve Veronica Ota for ordination* to the MWS and her installation as Peacemaking and Justice Minister for the Presbytery of San Jose (in conjunction with Good Growth Garden new worshipping community) and approve Terms of Call		August 7, 2026 7:00pm - Zoom

*Because Veronica Ota has indicated that she desires to be ordained by her presbytery of care, Presbytery of San Gabriel, at her home congregation (First Presbyterian Church, Altadena), Presbytery staff will propose an amendment at the August 7, 2026 special Presbytery meeting that transfers her membership to the Presbytery of San José following her ordination by the Presbytery of San Gabriel. Through discussions of our Presbytery staff with the executive presbyter and stated clerk of the Presbytery of San Gabriel, there will be mutual representation of each presbytery on one another's administration commissions to ordain and install Veronica Ota, and therefore, participating representatives of both presbyteries at the ordination service and installation service.

Veronica Toyomi Ota, Statement of Faith 2026

I believe in God – Eternal Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

I believe in the interconnectedness of God’s creation, that all existence is woven together by our Divine Creator in a network of mutuality. Our Eternal Ancestor created all things in relationship and proclaimed all to be good. I trust that God has generously and lovingly provided creation with everything needed to flourish and thrive.

I believe Christ came into the world as our Holy Redeemer to proclaim a message of hope for our full restoration as God’s beloved. The transcendent God spoke the Word into creation in the humble form of a Jewish baby, born to a young woman with unshakable faith, in a society deeply oppressed by the Roman Empire. A teacher, Jesus taught us to love God and neighbor. A healer, he offered restoration and recognition of human dignity. A prophet, he proclaimed good news to the poor, release to those held captive, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed.¹ Faithful to Abba God in life and in death, Jesus suffered execution on a cross that we might know the depth of God’s redemptive love for us and have hope for resurrection and life eternal. Jesus, the anointed Christ Messiah, offers us the possibility of wholeness and unity.

Through the power of the Spirit, Christ’s salvific grace draws us to God. I rejoice and give thanks that the Spirit is at work in and all around, sustaining and connecting all creation with the breath of life. The Spirit inspires our faith and empowers our love, drawing us together as the body of Christ, the church.

As a member of the holy catholic and apostolic church, I acknowledge its troubled history and legacy, as it has often been co-opted to rationalize violence and imperialism. I recognize the potential of humankind to do harm in Christ’s name, yet find strength in the potential of Christ to use the church for good. Following Christ’s lead, the church must reach out to those enduring oppression, discrimination, poverty, illness, imprisonment, isolation, and marginalization. We must challenge, dismantle, and present an alternative to the sinful structures of racism, overconsumption, and militarism.² United by and in Christ, our faith moves us to care for one another and for our planet, the home God created for all beings.

The Holy Spirit inspired generations of witnesses to articulate, preserve, and share their experiences of God in scripture. As the unique and authoritative witness to God’s revelation, the Bible helps me grow closer to God through Christ and deepens my compassion for all creation.

Through the sacraments of baptism and communion we live out our faith as a community

and experience profound spiritual connection with Christ. Water is essential to life, and the waters of baptism remind us of God's power to create, destroy, liberate, and cleanse. Through baptism, we become one with Christ and with all members of the church—past, present, and future. The Lord's Supper is an invitation from Jesus to further experience unity and wholeness, as we are all invited to the table to partake in the life-giving bread and wine that symbolize Christ's salvific love for us. The sacraments enable us to know and connect with the Trinity through direct sensory experiences that communicate God's presence to us in ways that speak beyond words.

I trust in the transcendent, immanent, and mysterious Divine, and commit myself to the sacred calling to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God.³ Praying for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven, I turn to follow Christ as Leader, and trust in the Holy Spirit's power to grant us the strength, courage, and compassion to live into our identity as peacemakers – children of God.⁴

¹ Luke 4:18, Isaiah 61:1

² Inspired by "The Three Evils of Society" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

³ Micah 6:8

⁴ Matthew 5:9

Veronica Ota Bio

My name is Veronica Toyomi Ota and I am a certified candidate for ministry with San Gabriel Presbytery and serve the Presbytery of San José as the Peacemaking and Justice Advocate. At the moment, I also continue to serve First Presbyterian Church, Altadena as Community Outreach Director. I am passionate about living out faith in action through education, activism, and reflection. I'm particularly interested in the intersections of ecological sustainability and spirituality, and hope to find paths in ministry that help the church cultivate sustainable communities that celebrate the interconnectedness of God's creation.

My cultural heritage is important to me. I'm a *yonsei* fourth-generation Japanese American of mixed cultural descent. One side of great-grandparents emigrated from Japan to Hawaii and California, while the others left Ireland and Germany for Ellis Island in New York. I grew up in an interfaith family with Catholics, Presbyterians, Buddhists, Agnostics, and non-religious folks. I continue to find myself drawn to interfaith spaces where all faith backgrounds are appreciated. My immigrant great-grandparents and American-born grandparents were incarcerated during WWII at Santa Anita Racetrack and in Rohwer, AK. We lived in my grandpa's house while I was growing up. He shared stories of some of the injustices he experienced, which profoundly shaped my own sense of justice, as well as my awareness of racism, wealth disparity, and generational trauma.

I attended Tufts University and received a degree in International Literary and Visual Studies, focusing on Japanese literature and culture. My senior honors thesis became a seminal project. I translated and compiled a collection of haiku poetry written by hibakusha survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After meeting Mr. Shigemoto, a survivor whose work I translated, I felt I must dedicate my life to making the world a more peaceful place.

I've always loved education and felt it was a force for positive change in the world. After college, I taught 6-12th grade choir then 7-8th grade math at a public school in Pasadena, and then spent one year teaching English in Japan on the JET Program. During this era, I also began working part-time in children's ministry at First Presbyterian Church, Altadena and started a Summer Peace Camp program that I continue to direct. Peace Camp combined my calling to peace work, my affinity for teaching, and my deep love for my intergenerational home church community. Through Peace Camp, I sensed God calling me to ministry.

I received my MDiv from Princeton Theological Seminary in 2024, with a certificate in Theology, Ecology, and Faith Formation. I worked at the seminary farm, The Farminary, overseeing the compost program, and later became the school's first Student Sustainability Coordinator. I also helped start a student group, Theological Ecological Initiative, with others who were passionate about earth care. Upon graduating, I received the Graduate Fellowship for Parish Ministry Award which funded my travels to nine countries spread out over the course of around seven months. The focus of my travels was to explore the intersections of spirituality and sustainability in other cultures, especially in interfaith community relations. Some of the most incredible and fulfilling parts of my travels included experiencing the Amazon Rainforest with Ticuna indigenous guides, working on an organic farm at the Asian Rural Institute in Japan, exploring over 20 temples in the Angkor Wat complex, hiking in the Himalayas, and talking with people from all over the world about the beauty of our planet and shared hopes for world peace.

The most pressing issue of my lifetime is the ecological crisis that threatens the viability of all life on this planet. The Bible, Church, and Reformed tradition are resources that help me understand my calling to peacemaking and justice ministry that is rooted in earth care. I pray that my sense of calling can be confirmed and supported through the process of ordination.

**Terms of Call for Veronica Ota
Peacemaking and Justice Minister for the Presbytery of San Jose
For Special Presbytery Meeting, August 7, 2026**

Title: Peacemaking and Justice Minister

Status: Ordainable, Designated Pastor – three year contract, subject to renewal

Reporting to: Executive Presbyter

Classification: Exempt, half-time, 25hours/week

Terms of Call:

\$40,000 Salary/Housing¹²

Benefits (member only) fully funded by BOP³ for three years⁴, assuming BOP approves grant

\$1500 professional expenses (\$1000 funded by Westview Presbyterian Church)

\$1000 continuing education

\$600 cell phone reimbursement

Start Date: October 1, 2026

1 Month (31 days) vacation

2 weeks (14 days) study leave

3 months sabbatical leave at/after 7th year of continuous service with expectation you will remain in the position for at least one year following the sabbatical leave

¹ This represents a little more than half of the minimum effective salary for Monterey County, where Veronica Ota resides.

² Per Financial Affairs Committee, this will be identified in the budget as 40% (of 25 hours and of the effective salary) for Good Growth Garden/Westview-Watsonville and 60% (of 25 hours and of the effective salary) for Presbytery Peacemaking and Justice work

³ <https://www.pensions.org/what-we-offer/benefits-packages/Benefits-grants-for-organizing-pastors-and-evangelists>

⁴ At Year 4, Presbytery's share would be 33.3%; at Year 5, Presbytery's share would be 66 2/3%

On Authorizing the Sale of the Manse of Westview Presbyterian Church-Watsonville

**Special Presbytery Meeting
Friday, August 7, 2026**

Recommended Action from the Financial Affairs Committee

That the Presbytery of San José approve and authorize the sale of the manse of the Westview Presbyterian Church of Watsonville, and authorizes the Financial Affairs Committee to guide and oversee the sale transaction.

Rationale

Westview Presbyterian Church of Watsonville desires the option to sell the manse and use the sale proceeds for investment income. The Church plans to use the principal for a future pastor either through purchasing another manse somewhere else or engaging in a shared equity agreement. It might be needed for emergency purposes as directed by the Church Session, but Session hopes to keep the principal intact for consistent income.

The investment income will be used, as the rental income was, for making ends meet in the church budget.

The current pastor, The Rev. Dan Hoffman, and his family have not lived in the manse. The manse had been rented for over 20 years and the tenant recently left. The church is currently renovating it to prepare it for sale. The alley where the manse is not as safe as it used to be, and the church would rather not maintain nor own this property. The Presbytery conveyed the deed to the Westview Church in 1979.

Presbytery action is needed to approve and authorize the sale of church property (*Book of Order*, G-4.0206a; Presbytery Standing Rules 4.84c).

As the corporate officers of the Presbytery, the Executive Presbyter or Stated Clerk will sign-off on behalf of the Presbytery on all sale-related documents.