



Presbytery of San José

July 31, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Greetings in the grace of Jesus Christ, the love of the heavenly Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. I hope and pray you, your loved ones, and your respective ministries are flourishing in the love and joy of the Lord. Wherever you are in God's good creation, may you continue to bear witness and embody the goodness and mercy of the Holy One.

This week, I would like to share the reflection I offered on Monday during an ecumenical prayer vigil at Gilroy City Hall. The gathering was organized by PACT (People Acting in Community Together) in an effort to express solidarity and accompaniment for migrant communities in the midst of a proposed construction of a ICE detention center.

On Hope

The ancient wisdom of the Judeo Christian traditions beautifully pray this:

“Our soul waits for the Lord;
He is our help and shield.
Our heart is glad in him,
Because we trust in his holy name.
Let your steadfast love, O LORD, be upon us,
Even as we hope in you.” (Psalm 33:20-22)

These words from the ancient writers occurred during the time of the Iron Age. Verse 17 of that chapter decries this: “The war horse is a vain hope for victory, and by its great might it cannot save.”

This is a prayer in the midst of empire. Empire places its hope in the power of might, that somehow might makes right. Empire places its hope in might-makes-right. Empire's tools are fear, weapons that inflict pain, violence, and death, that pits neighbor against neighbor, that replaces love with despair.

In the midst of this, hope springs and remains alive. Hope is the enduring struggle of a people whose past-present-future is in the loving and living God who supports the downtrodden, the vulnerable, the marginalized, the poor in spirit, the ones whom Empire grinds down and sets aside. Hope is that little blooming flower in the sidewalk crack, the presence of a human being who sits with you in the hospital room without saying a word but whose bodily existence is all that needs to be said. Hope is dancing and singing in the morning after an evening of crying and weeping. Hope is the Lord who is help and shield. Hope is when life and light cracks upon the stone boulder, rolls it away, and the tomb is empty. Hope is when strangers in the night gather at Gilroy, lifting up prayers, embracing the struggle, and living for another day.

Centuries later, another wise writer and prophetic preacher of the Lord encouraged those who were losing hope: “We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but

not destroyed.” For he says, we carry in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our bodies.

May we who are gathered here – through this community gathering, in our bodies, with our words, with our prayers, with our lives – endure with hope in the Lord who is our hope.

Lord, let your steadfast love be upon us, even as we hope in you.

*For Gilroy Prayer Vigil Protesting ICE Detention/Processing Facility
– July 27, 2026*



In Joy & Justice,

Neal

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

*#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice*

EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

August 2: Worshipping at Daesung Presbyterian Church-Sunnyvale for 50th founding anniversary (11:00am)

August 9: Preaching at Trinity Presbyterian Church-Santa Cruz (10:30am)

August 10-23: Vacation

August 30: Preaching at Westview Presbyterian Church-Watsonville (10:00am);

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

Featured

Called Special Meeting of the Presbytery **Next Friday, August 7th at 7:00 PM** **(via Zoom)**



The Coordinating Council has announced a called special meeting to be held on Friday, August 7, at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom. Members will consider several significant items of business, including the validation of a new Presbytery Peacemaking and Justice Minister position and Good Growth Gardens as a worshipping community, the ordination and installation of Ms. Veronica Ota, and a request from Westview Presbyterian Church regarding the sale of its manse.

Members are encouraged to review the meeting materials in advance.

[View the full docket and call to the meeting here.](#)

Register for the called special meeting [here](#). The Zoom link will be provided after registration. Related motions and additional meeting information are also available on the Presbytery website under [Meetings](#).

Questions may be directed to Stated Clerk Grace Kaori Suzuki at gracekaori@sanjosephy.org, Executive Presbyter Neal Pesa at neal@sanjosephy.org, or Communications & Executive Support Associate Colin Richardson at colin@sanjosephy.org.



Remembering Hiroshima & Nagasaki: **Participate In Global Day of Action & Prayer**

August 6 and August 9 mark the tragic anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We hope that all our Presbytery members, churches, worshipping communities, and extended community can take time this week to remember the generations of people affected by the atrocities of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and offer prayers for a peaceful world free from the threat of nuclear destruction.

On **Wednesday, August 5 at 4pm (PST)**, you can participate in the Global Silent Minute by joining the "May Peace Prevail on Earth Program" live streamed from Hiroshima. [View the livestream here online here.](#)

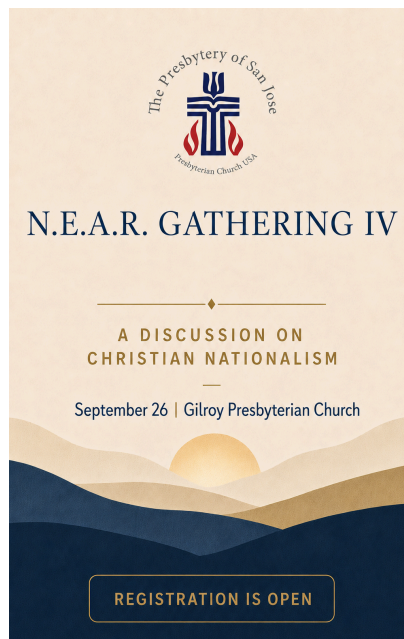
The Charter for Compassion has organized Hiroshima & Nagasaki: Global Days of Action and Prayer from August 5-9 with a number of meaningful presentations and panels. More information can be found [on their website here](#).

Respectfully,
Veronica Ota – (Veronica@sanjosephby.org)
Peacemaking and Justice Advocate

NEAR Gathering IV
Register Now
through September 12th

The Presbytery of San Jose's fourth N.E.A.R. Gathering will take place on Saturday, September 26, 2026 (9:00 am to 1:00 pm) at Gilroy Presbyterian Church. This year's gathering is centered around a pressing and timely theme: Christian Nationalism.

Guest Speakers from Princeton Seminary will deliver keynote addresses and partake in a sit-down discussion with EP Neal Presa. Light Breakfast and lunch provided. This event is made possible by the Synod's Anne Penke fund.



Register Here

This Week



GA 227 at a Glance: Key Actions & Decisions

The 227th General Assembly addressed a wide range of issues affecting the life, witness, and governance of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) during last month's plenary sessions. The attached resource gathers selected articles from The Presbyterian Outlook and the PC(USA) website to highlight key decisions and plenary actions.

[View & Download Resource Here.](#)

GA Town Hall Meeting – Hear Directly From Our GA Reps!

Additionally, the Presbytery will host a **Town Hall via Zoom** on **August 27, 2026 at 6:00 PM**, in which our commissioners and Young Adult Advisory Delegate will share their experiences from the Assembly. The Town hall will be via zoom, with the access link provided below and on the resource document. No registration is required to attend; more details will be shared in the weeks to come.

[Virtual Town Hall - Zoom Link](#)

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 4401 5745

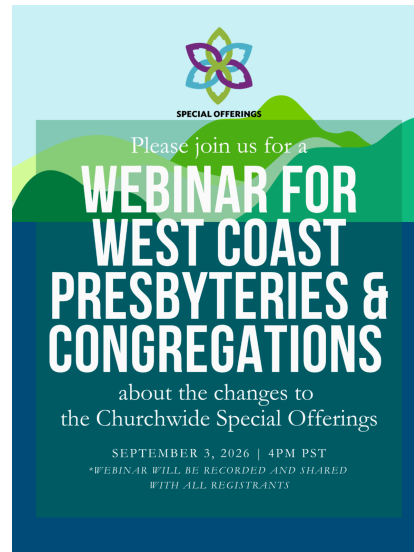
Special Offerings Webinar Hosted by PC(USA)

September 3rd at 4:00 PM PT

On Thursday, September 3, at 4:00 p.m. PT, PC(USA) Special Offerings staff will host a webinar for West Coast presbyteries and congregations about recent changes to the denomination's churchwide Special Offerings.

Participants will learn about the General Assembly action behind the changes, the causes each offering will support, and a new grant opportunity through the World Communion Offering. The webinar will also include time for questions and feedback.

Registration for the webinar is available below. Those unable to attend live are still encouraged to register, as a recording will be shared with all registrants.



REGISTER

Mental Wellness Resource:

Tailored Sessions

Offered by Rev. Sharon LeClaire

"Anxiety is the number one reason people seek disability financial assistance."



As a result, Rev. Sharon LeClaire of Stone Church Willow Glen is extending an invitation to partake in a series of adult education classes on depression, anxiety, and other aspects of mental health. As anxiety and related concerns continue to affect individuals and families across our communities, these sessions offer a compassionate and informative setting to deepen understanding, reduce stigma, and strengthen the church's capacity for care.

Classes may also be tailored to explore topics such as brain anatomy, major depression, therapy, medication etc. Each session is approximately one hour, including time for questions, and costs \$250. To learn more or schedule a class, contact Rev. LeClaire at sharon.j.leclaire@gmail.com, call 415-302-0088, or visit revsharonleclaire.com.

Board of Pensions to Update 2027 Post-Retirement Medical Coverage



Beginning January 1, 2027, the Board of Pensions will transition its post-retirement medical coverage from Humana to the UnitedHealthcare Group Medicare Advantage PPO Plan, with prescription drug coverage provided through Express Scripts. The new plans will replace the current Humana medical and prescription drug plans, which end December 31, 2026.

There will be no monthly premium for members in 2027, as the Board will fully subsidize the \$284-per-member monthly cost. Members retiring during 2026 may enroll in the Humana plan through the end of the year and will automatically transition to the new coverage unless they opt out during Medicare open enrollment, October 15–December 7, 2026.

For active employees, the 2027 Medical Plan will offer six coverage options: the existing PPO, EPO, and HDHP options—renamed Premier—plus three new Select options with similar features and different out-of-pocket costs. Employers may offer any combination of these options to eligible employees not enrolled through the Congregational Pastors Package or Transitional Pastor's Participation. Ministers and eligible family members enrolled through those packages will continue to receive PPO coverage, renamed PPO Premier for 2027.

[Learn more about the 2027 Medical Plan options.](#)

[Read the Full Board of Pensions Bulletin Here.](#)

Free Chancel Candles Available through Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church

Pastor Deborah Troester of Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church is giving away an excess of sanctuary supplies those interested. This includes:

- 23 beeswax Chancel candles (white, excellent condition; 14 in.)

Candles may be picked up at the 4th NEAR Gathering in Gilroy (September 26) or directly from the church office (5730 Snell Ave, San Jose; Tuesday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–4 p.m.) To arrange pickup, contact Deborah Troester at prdebsthpc@gmail.com or call the church office at (408) 629-5906.

📌 Notice for All Congregations & Ministry Partners Updated IRS Mileage Rate

Effective July 1 through December 31, 2026, the IRS optional standard mileage rate for eligible business and ministry-related travel increases from 72.5 cents to 76 cents per mile. Organizations using the IRS rate should update their reimbursement policies, forms and accounting systems accordingly (*this includes NWC's, affiliated nonprofits,*

and ministry partners). Travel completed before July 1 remains subject to the earlier rate.

Please note that the rate for mileage driven as a volunteer in service to a charitable organization remains unchanged (14 cents per mile). Read the full announcement for further guidance:

[IRS Announcement 2026-11](#)

A Place at the Table ☺☺

JULY EDITION

Rev. Ryan Althaus · Hunger Advocate



Learn how a Presbyterian congregation in Georgia is spouting up in all sorts of ways that can blossom at your church too! Our Presbytery has some amazing examples to visit too from hope village's NWC out of Westview Presbyterian in Watsonville to our nonprofit partners at common roots farm and the homeless garden project in Santa Cruz. Let me know if you'd like to schedule a mission day with your congregation to check them out or if you'd like help planning out your own garden.

[Read the Full story from Presbyterian News Service here.](#)

[Visit Ryan's Hunger website for more articles and resources here.](#)

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

Pieces on Peace ☺

Veronica Ota · Peacemaking & Justice Advocate



Take Action:
Help Support Educational Programs
for Incarcerated Neighbors!

[Donate now](#) to support the **Transformative Justice Center's** (Monterey, CA) "Summer Freedom Match Campaign" for the Empathy in Action program.

Empathy in Action offers the unique opportunity for college students, faculty, and select public to engage in deep dialogue and deep listening with incarcerated populations, following a Transformative Justice curriculum. The program motto is “Engaging literature, and our own stories, to build bridges of empathy, insight, and healing between the incarcerated and the public.”

Incarcerated participants from Empathy in Action have pledged \$5000 of their own funds to match donations given to the Summer Freedom Match. That is how much they believe in this program - that they have saved up and pledged their own money while imprisoned to bring awareness to the Empathy in Action program.

If you'd like to learn more or consider applying to the Empathy in Action program, reach out to Megan at the Transformative Justice Center:

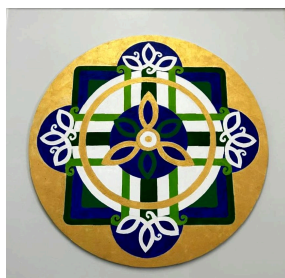
mmcdrew@transformativejusticecenter.org, or contact our Peacemaking and Justice

Advocate: Veronica@sanjosepby.org.

LEARN MORE

Unity Candle □

SUNDAY, AUGUST 2



Westhope Presbyterian Church

Saratoga

This Sunday, we recognize Westhope Presbyterian Church of Saratoga as they host the Unity Candle. Notably, we ask that you lift up Westhope's Pastor and Spiritual Director, the Rev. Erik Swanson, along with the dedicated elders, deacons, staff, and stewards who help guide the congregation's many offerings. Westhope describes itself as a "healing place for spirituality, community, ritual, contemplation, and action—a community where people can explore theology, reimagine church, and deepen their love of God, self, others, and the Earth."

Westhope nurtures spiritual growth through contemplative worship each Sunday at 10:00 AM, meditative candlelight practices (Taizé), and bible study groups. Members also care for the congregation's beloved Spiral Garden, gathering on Thursday mornings under the leadership of Elder Pam Nomura. Beyond its campus, Westhope offers a public witness

through Moral Mondays and its continued commitment to anti-racism, confronting Christian nationalism, and advocating alongside immigrants communities in Saratoga and beyond.

As Westhope Presbyterian Church receives the Unity Candle this week, we ask our neighboring congregations to lift its pastor, leaders, members, and ministry partners in prayer. May God continue to strengthen Westhope as a place of healing, courageous reflection, meaningful action, and ever-deepening love for God's people and creation.

To learn more about this week's congregation, you can visit their website here:
[Westhope PC – Saratoga](#)

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

Clergy Reminders

Required Training for Clerks of Session August 15th & September 12th



Clerks of Session and other church leaders responsible for minutes are asked to attend one of the two upcoming trainings. Both dates will include the same content (a sessions minute review and clerk-specific training), facilitated by Stated Clerk Grace Kaori Suzuki. Available dates are listed below:

Saturday, August 15 — St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, 9:00–11:00am
Saturday, September 12 — Westminster Presbyterian Church, 9:00–11:00am

Please register in advance at the link below. Direct any questions regarding minutes review or clerk responsibilities to Stated Clerk Grace Kaori Suzuki at gracekaori@sanjosepby.org.

REGISTER HERE

Retired Clergy Gathering & Luncheon Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos Wednesday, September 9 at 11:30 a.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, at 11:30am at Presbyterian Church of 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.

For those Elders who have already registered (via mail, online, email, etc.), you do not need to complete any other steps. We look forward to gathering together.

Registration is now Available at the link below.

RSVP Deadline Is August 15th.

[RSVP HERE](#)



Clergy & Church Leaders of Color Retreat Zephyr Point | October 19th to 22nd

Registration is now available for this year's Clergy and Church Leaders of Color Retreat, co-facilitated with the Presbyteries San Francisco, Redwoods, and North Central California. Visit the link below to view event, payment & subsidy information. RSVP deadline is September 30.

[REGISTER NOW](#)

Employment Opportunities

The Presbytery and it's partners/affiliates are always hiring. Visit our Employment Opportunities page or read about new opportunities below from congregation and Presbytery-affiliated organizations:



Stone Church of Willow Glen

- [Family Ministry Assistant Director](#) **NEW LISTING*

First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View

- [Part-Time Female Vocalist](#)

First Congregational Church of San Jose (UCC)

- [Assistant to Interim Minister](#)

First Presbyterian Church of Snohomish (Washington State)

- [Installed Pastor](#)

Urban Sanctuary San Jose

- [Part-Time Lead Pastor](#)

[VIEW ALL POSITIONS](#)

www.sanjosepby.org

[View as Webpage](#)

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