



Presbytery of San José

August 28, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Grace and peace in the name of our Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Next week I turn the big 5-0. Having just returned from two weeks vacation with my family for a birthday trip to southeast Asia, I have been doing much reflection about the past five decades. During our vacation, our youngest son who will be graduating from college next year, was preparing for and then did two job interviews via Zoom. His interviews and my birthday reflections put to the foreground the importance of kindness. Kindness. All these interviews with major management consulting firms, were looking for his ability to critically analyze cases and do the on-the-spot quantitative calculations, they were also looking at his emotional self-awareness. His EQ (emotional quotient) was as important if not more important than the IQ. Yes, the smarts and thought processes of working through case studies were critical, but even more was the vibe of prospective work associates and senior partners. Can they see him as a potential colleague? Would he fit in the culture and ethos of the organization? In other words, is he a decent and kind person, one with whom professionalism and good humor go hand-in-hand, the ability to read a room and comport oneself accordingly, where people are dignified for their worth.

Returning from vacation this week and back to the work of our Presbytery, I experienced like you and the rest of the world the death of Dolly Rebecca Parton, beloved child of God, a redeemed one in Jesus Christ. By all accounts and what we all experienced of her music, she was a decent and kind human being. She never forgot her humble beginnings, the family who raised her, and the hard economic times that her family raised her and her siblings. From “Islands in the Stream” to “I Will Always Love You” to “Jolene,” and so many hit songs, Dolly Parton had a way of touching and speaking to the human heart, to our human pursuit for our better selves, to see love embodied and formed in relationships. When it was not popular and receiving the critique and opposition of many in the music industry and in culture, she was one of the first celebrities who openly advocated for the full inclusion and welcome of LGBTQIA+ persons. In her 1991 song “Family” from the album “Eagle When She Flies,” she sung: “Some are preachers, some are gay / Some are addicts, drunks and strays / But not a one is turned away when it's family.” Hers was a life of decency, of dignity, of welcome.



We need more kindness, more decency, a deeper and consistent intentionality of valuing the worth of every human being. We are in this short life together. At this writing, my heart and prayer life are connected to the precious people of Nepal and Tibet, the thousands who are still missing, and the many who perished in the flash flood two days ago due to the glacier collapse at the Himalayas. There is so much loss of life, wars that rage in Iran and Ukraine/Russia. There is so much of our fellow human beings whose lives and livelihood are imperiled. Even in our own context – where vulnerable communities, migrants and asylum seekers who desire and deserve protection as they and their families fear of being detained and deported at a next ICE hearing.

As I enter the sixth decade, the words of Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:12 on kindness become more and more salient as necessary imperatives and callings in my own life, and in my pastoral exhortation to you and in every sphere in which I live and serve. Imagine what our neighborhoods, our communities, our committees, our relationships, our work environment, our world would be like if the needle were tilted a bit more towards kindness and decency? Imagine if we welcomed all, if we lived into the commitment “All are welcome and belong” through our stated policies and our actual attitudes and actions.

The late Methodist minister theologian and hymn composer John Wesley famously said: “Do all the good you can, By all the means you can, In all the ways you can, In all the places you can, At all the times you can, To all the people you can, As long as ever you can.”

In the coming days, my wife Grace and I will pay an homage to Dolly Parton by watching her 1980 hit film “Nine to Five” in which she co-starred with Lily Tomlin and Jane Fonda. Her hit song by the same title was the theme song for that movie, about the fight against gender inequality in the workplace. The efficacy of Parton’s hope and vision of what human beings can be was such that yesterday the palace guards at Buckingham Palace in London played “Nine to Five.” That’s how importantly influential and necessary was what Dolly Parton contributed in her own unique way to our common humanity.

Our call to be kind and decent is a 24/7 call. “As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.”

May it be so.

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

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

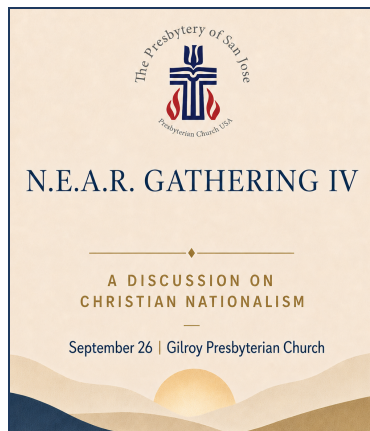
IN THIS ISSUE

A quick look at this week's news, events, and opportunities.

FEATURED

N.E.A.R. Gathering I.V.

Sept 26 · Gilroy Presbyterian Church — a discussion on Christian Nationalism. RSVP by Sep 12. [Register Here](#)



THIS WEEK

An Afternoon with

Pastor Deb Troester

Sat, Aug 29 · 2–4pm · Stone Church of Willow Glen — discussion & recap of GA 227. RSVP: rmgzisch@gmail.com



MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

Good Growth Garden Community Yard Sale

Sat, Aug 29 · 9am–3pm · Westview PC — proceeds support the Good Growth Garden ministry.

Contact: veronica@sanjosephby.org



UNITY CANDLE

First Pres. Church of Mountain View

Sunday, Aug 30 · Rev. Kim-Dorr-Tilley



PRESBYTER REMINDERS

PSJ Fall Clergy Retreat '26:

ADVOCACY

Raise the Barn Festival

Oct. 28–29 | *San Juan Bautista*

October 28 – 29 · St. Francis Retreat Center ·
San Juan Bautista, CA

[Register Now](#)

Sept 12 · 3–7pm · Common Roots Farm —

live music, food, art vendors & more to
support the Inclusive Barn Project. [Register &
Learn More Here](#)

EP ON THE ROAD

Preaching Aug 30

Westview Presbyterian, Watsonville (10am) ·
San Martin Presbyterian (1pm)



EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

August 30: Preaching at Westview Presbyterian Church - Watsonville (10:00am);
Preaching at San Martin Presbyterian Church (1:00pm)

September 2: Mid Council leaders of Northern California retreat - San Damiano Retreat
Center, Danville

September 6: Northminster Presbyterian Church-Salinas preaching (10:00am) and 102nd
anniversary of St. Philip's Presbyterian Church-Salinas preaching (11:30am)

September 9: Co-hosting retired clergy luncheon at Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos
(11:30am)

September 10-16: Personal Leave - visit parents in Guam

September 19: Attending ordination of Veronica Ota - First Presbyterian Church, Altadena,
Presbytery of San Gabriel

September 26: NEAR Gathering IV - Gilroy Presbyterian Church (9:00am-1:00pm)

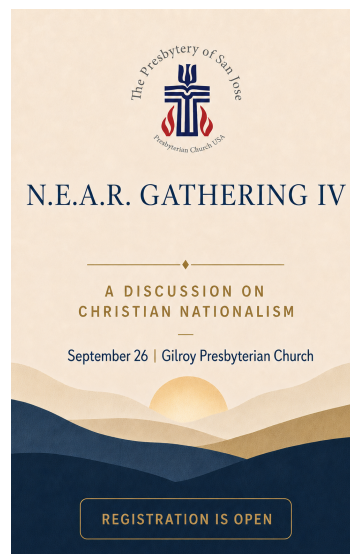
If you would like to invite the EP to guest preach, facilitate a class, lead a retreat, help with
strategic visioning/planning, or grab a cup of coffee, email neal@sanjosepby.org or call/text
(408) 763-5004.

Featured

NEAR Gathering IV Register by Sep. 12

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

Watch the GA227 Town Hall

Missed Thursday's GA227 Virtual Town Hall Discussion? Watch the recording to hear updates from the 227th General Assembly and reflections from our Presbytery commissioners and YAAD.

Watch the Zoom recording at the link here →

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/ARVgNe5jCp52g09b8ox-Nbc_thLUzfkWYFYZfl05WR4A3prTmL-QjSSwFWikooh.rCGWL-BWm07JwVL4

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Unity Candle □

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30



First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View

Mountain View

This Sunday, we recognize First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View as they host the Unity Candle. Notably, we ask that you lift up their Pastor, the Rev. Kim Dorr-Tilley, along with the dedicated ministry leaders, administrators and deacons who have facilitated the life of this congregation. Recently celebrating 175 years since its founding in 1851, Mountain View carries a remarkable legacy as one of the oldest Protestant congregations in California — a community that has remained a source of comfort, hope, and guidance through generations of change.

Founded before Silicon Valley had a name, the congregation has grown from a group of Gold Rush-era settlers who hoped to establish a place of worship. Today, the congregation continues to spread that same enduring message of being "Anchored in Hope, Growing in Love, and Pursuing our Purpose."

First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View nurtures faith and community through weekly study groups, communal coffee gatherings, and communal entertainment. The congregation is currently offering free community screenings of *The Chosen*, inviting participants to reflect on the life and ministry of Jesus together through conversation and shared experience.

As First Presbyterian Church of Mountain View hosts the candle this Sunday, we ask our neighboring congregations to lift it up in prayer. May God continue to bless this historic congregation as it continues to be a vibrant presence within the broader Silicon Valley community.

To learn more about this week's congregation, you can visit their website here:
[FPC – Mountain View](#)

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

This Week

PWP San Jose Presents:
An Afternoon with Pastor Deb Troester
GA 227 Discussion & Recap
Stone Church of Willow Glen | August 29

Join us this Saturday, August 29, from 2–4 p.m. at Stone Church of Willow Glen for a time of discussion and reflection about the 227th General Assembly (GA 227) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Teaching Elder Commissioner Deb Troester will share her experience and reflections from GA 227, offering an opportunity for members and all who are interested to learn more about the Assembly's work, decisions, and ongoing impact on the church. The gathering will take place at Stone Church, 1937 Lincoln Ave., San José. All are welcome!

To RSVP, email PWP Moderator Rosaleen Zisch directly:
rmgzisch@gmail.com

The graphic is a vertical rectangular poster. At the top, it says "PWP San José" in a script font, followed by "Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of San José" in a smaller sans-serif font, and "invites you to.." in a cursive font. Below that, it says "An afternoon with Pastor Deb Troester". The middle section features a portrait of Pastor Deb Troester on the left and a cityscape of San Jose on the right. Below the portrait is a black box with white text: "Aug. 29", "2 to 4PM", "Stone Church of Willow Glen", and "1937 Lincoln Ave. SJ". To the right of the portrait is a circular logo for the "GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)" with "GA 227" in the center and "MILWAUKEE 2024" at the bottom. The bottom section of the graphic has a dark blue background with white text: "Teaching Elder Commissioner to General Assembly", "August 29, 2-4pm at Stone Church", "1937 Lincoln Ave., San Jose", and "RSVP to rmgzisch@gmail.com".

**Support Good Growth Garden
at Community Yard Sale
Westview PC | Saturday, August 29**

Westview Presbyterian Church will be hosting a Community Yard Sale on Saturday, August 29, from 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. Donations of furniture, tools, clothing, household items, and more are welcome and may be dropped off on Friday, August 28, from 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. and 6:00–8:00 p.m., or by appointment.

All proceeds will benefit the Good Growth Garden ministry project, supporting its ongoing work to serve the community. For donation information or to arrange an alternate drop-off time, contact Veronica Ota at Veronica@sanjosepby.org.



**Common Roots Presents:
Raise the Barn Festival
In Support of the Inclusive Barn Project
Common Roots Farm | September 12**

Our hunger advocate Ryan Althaus, in collaboration with Common Root's Farm, would like to invite any and all to the *Raise the Barn Festival* on Saturday, September 12, from 3–7 p.m. A family-friendly afternoon of live music, food, art vendors, games, and more, the also event aims to help Common Roots complete its new barn.

The new barn will expand Common Roots' ability to offer year-round opportunities for people with disabilities, including farming and gardening classes, employment in the barn's retail store, and space for community gatherings and celebrations.

The event is open to members of the Presbytery and friends alike, we encourage all to come out in support of a worthy community cause. Learn more and register at the link here: commonrootsfarm.org/barnfest

Want to learn more about Common Roots' Barn Project?
Visit the link here: barn.commonrootsfarm.org



Pieces on Peace ☮

Veronica Ota · Peacemaking & Justice Advocate

**"ICE OUT" Vigil Returns to Gilroy
This Sunday, Aug 30**

The next Interfaith Freedom Vigil in opposition of a Gilroy detention center will be held this Sunday, August 30, from 3–4pm.

This peaceful, family-friendly gathering held on the 4th Sunday of each month remains open to people of all faiths and of none.

Important Info:

Sunday's vigil will place at 7240 Holsclaw Rd., Gilroy. Parking remains limited, so attendees should park at Valley Health Center (7475 Camino Arroyo Dr.) and take the shuttle, which begins running at 2:30pm. Those coming from the Peninsula can find a carpool sign-up linked below. Registration is available but not required.

This vigil is sponsored by the Santa Cruz Welcoming Network, ICE Out of the Bay, PACT (People Acting in Community Together), and the Santa Cruz Interfaith Network Communities of Sanctuary. Questions can be directed to Veronica Ota, Peacemaking and Justice Advocate.

Register (optional):

mobilize.us/disappearedinamerica

Carpool sign-up (Peninsula):

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1rRVF8S>

Sunday,
August 30th
3pm - 4pm

ICE out of GILROY

 **FREEDOM VIGIL**

STOP DETENTION CENTER NEAR GILROY FROM OPENING!

7240 Holsclaw Rd
Gilroy, CA 95020

This is a recurring monthly vigil for peace in our communities and in the world, in solidarity with our friends, neighbors, and community members who are being unjustly detained and deported by ICE.
Join us every 4th Sunday of the month!

*Bring signs!
And a chair if you'd like to sit!*

This is a peaceful, family friendly event open to people of all faiths and of none

Let's lift our voices to stop the deportations, shut the detention centers, and end the inhumane attacks on migrants

Sponsors:



Presbyter Reminders



LEADERS OF COLOR 2026
PRESENTS:

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH SPIRITUAL PRACTICE



REGISTER VIA QR
CODE OR LINK BELOW:



[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/X
B5ESGBNTMXQ7PTB6](https://forms.gle/XB5ESGBNTMXQ7PTB6)

FACILITATED BY:
REV. DR. RUTH T. WEST

**OCTOBER 19-22
2026**

**ZEPHYR POINT
CONFERENCE
CENTER**

CLERGY OF COLOR AND CHURCH LEADERS OF COLOR IN THE
PRESBYTERIES OF SAN JOSE, SAN FRANCISCO, REDWOODS, AND
NORTH CENTRAL CALIFORNIA ARE INVITED TO REGISTER.

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Building Resilience Through Spiritual Practice
Clergy & Church Leaders of Color Retreat
Zephyr Point | October 19 – 22

Registration is now open for this year's Clergy and Church Leaders of Color Retreat, co-facilitated with the Presbyteries of San Francisco, Redwoods, and North Central California.

This year's gathering, "Building Resilience Through Spiritual Practice," will be facilitated by The Rev. Dr. Ruth T. West, Associate Dean at San Francisco Theological Seminary and an ordained PC(USA) Minister of Word and Sacrament and Spiritual Director. With experience in spiritual direction, trauma care, and dismantling systemic racism, Ruth brings a rich perspective to this year's gathering.

Visit the link below for event, payment, and subsidy information. RSVP by September 30.

Register at the link here: forms.gle/cndzSRknXwVEBNKu9

Fall '26 Clergy Retreat Announced: Oct. 28–29
St. Francis Retreat Center | San Juan Bautista



Pastors and ministers of our Presbytery are invited once again to step away for rest and renewal at this year's Clergy Retreat, October 28–29, 2026, at St. Francis Retreat Center in San Juan Bautista. This gathering offers clergy a time set apart for fellowship and peaceful study in a picturesque setting.

Overnight registration (\$100) includes dinner on October 28 and breakfast and lunch on October 29; commuter registration (\$50) is also available for those joining for the day. Register now the form here: forms.gle/7C8kKeWsUVQ9QhiG6

Checks should be made payable to the Presbytery of San José and mailed to the Presbytery office. For questions or inquiries, contact EP Neal Presa at neal@sanjosepby.org

Stewardship Kaleidoscope Conference 2026
Cultivate Generosity & Leadership Practices
September 21 – 23 | Baltimore, MD



Registration is now open for Stewardship Kaleidoscope 2026, an annual ecumenical conference taking place from September 21–23, 2026, in Baltimore, Maryland. Drawing participants from the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and other ecumenical partners, the conference features informative

workshops, plenary speakers and networking opportunities aimed toward expanding leadership skills and cultivating stewardship in congregations.

Whether you are a pastor, ruling elder, stewardship committee member, finance leader, or anyone passionate about generosity in the life of the Church, Stewardship Kaleidoscope offers practical tools and fresh ideas to bring back to your congregation. Registration information is available here: stewardshipkaleidoscope.org/registration/

The Presbytery of San Jose will cover the conference registration fee for those interested in attending. Those seeking financial assistance with travel and lodging expenses are invited to submit a sponsorship request to EP Neal Presa at neal@sanjosephby.org.

Employment Opportunities

The Presbytery and its 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](#)

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.sanjosephby.org

[View as Webpage](#)

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

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