



Presbytery of San José

September 11, 2026

Dear Members and Friends of the Presbytery of San José,

Today marks twenty-five years since the events that took place on September 11, 2001, in New York City. A quarter century is long enough that some among us carry no memory of that day at all. Speaking as someone born in the weeks directly following, I have yet to meet anyone who cannot pinpoint exactly what they felt that morning. It is perhaps the clearest example we have of collective memory and shared trauma.

Today we remember the nearly three thousand who died that morning, and those who have died in the years since from the illnesses they carried out of the rubble. We remember the families who have lived every day since in the absence of a loved one. We remember, too, the neighbors who were met with suspicion or violence in the days that followed, simply for how they prayed or where their families had come from. Remembrance that is honest holds all of this together.

In searching for scripture to accompany today's remembrance, I found myself turning instead to Mr. Fred Rogers, an ordained minister and beloved neighbor, who often passed along his mother's counsel for frightening times: look for the helpers. Amid the countless wounded and hurting, we were never short of them — those on the ground, those in the emergency rooms, and those who had been spared and chose to go looking for injured strangers anyway. The Gospel asks us not only to look for the helpers, but to be counted among them.

So today we hold the names we know and the many we do not. We hold those whose grief has no anniversary because they live with it daily. Additionally, let us set our intention toward a struggle just as demanding: that our sorrow would not harden into indifference toward one another, but soften us toward the neighbor whose loss looks different from our own. Blessings to you all as we enter another week together.

Regards,

Colin Richardson
Communications and Executive Support Associate
colin@sanjosepby.org

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

IN THIS ISSUE

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

FEATURED

Raise the Barn Festival

Sept 12 · 3–7pm · Common Roots Farm —
live music, food, art vendors & more to

ADVOCACY

ICE OUT Prayer Vigil

Sept 26 · 2pm · Following NEAR Gathering,
at the proposed ICE detention site in Gilroy.

support the Inclusive Barn Project. [Register & Learn More Here](#)



More details to come.



MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

Retired Colleagues Gather for Inaugural Luncheon

Wednesday, Sep 9 · Pres. Church of Los Gatos. Board of Pensions Rep. Christine Long shared updates for 2027.
Read Full Piece Below...



UNITY CANDLE

First Pres. Church of Palo Alto

Sunday, Sep 13 · Rev. Tom Harris



PRESBYTER REMINDERS

PSJ Fall Clergy Retreat '26 | Oct. 28–29

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

[Register Now](#)

EP ON THE ROAD

Attending & Participating in Ordination of Veronica Ota | Sep. 19

Ordination at 2:00 pm · First Pres. Church of Altadena · Presbytery of San Gabriel

EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

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

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

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

October 4: Preaching at First Presbyterian Church-Mountain View (10:00am); Attending retirement of The Rev Dennis Woodsmall at First Presbyterian Church-Santa Clara (12:00pm)

October 11-14: Mid-Council Leaders Gathering at Presbyterian Center; Louisville, KY

October 14-16: Auburn Theological Seminary board of directors at New York City

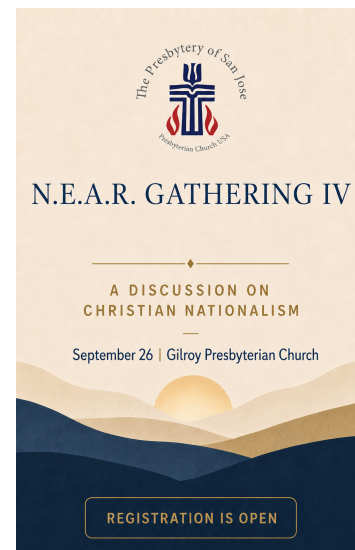
If you would like to invite the EP to guest preach, facilitate a class, lead a retreat, help with strategic visioning/planning, or grab a cup of coffee, email neal@sanjosepby.org or call/text (408) 763-5004.

Featured

NEAR Gathering IV ****Registration Closes Tomorrow***

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





STILL IN MINISTRY: An Inaugural Gathering of Retired Colleagues

On Tuesday, September 9, Rev. Dr. Neal Presa and Rev. Jack Longley co-hosted the Presbytery's first gathering of retired colleagues at Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos. The room held honorably retired clergy and staff alongside colleagues still very much active in ministry, and that mix turned out to be the heart of the afternoon.

Over lunch and table introductions, it became clear that ministry does not end at retirement so much as change shape — pulpit supply, mentoring, theological publications, and the quiet ministry of showing up for one another. Calls conclude; the calling does not.

Attendees also heard from Rev. Christine Long of the Board of Pensions of the PC(USA), who walked the group through benefit updates taking effect in the coming calendar year and took questions from the floor. Read more about 2027 plan updates here: pensions.org/what-we-offer/church-plans/updates

From the Executive Presbyterian: A Reflection on Gathering, Published by New College Berkeley

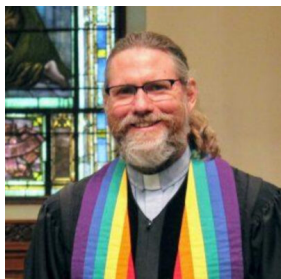
At the invitation of New College Berkeley's executive director, Craig Wong, EP Neal Presa has a new reflection published by NCB, now available to read. Titled "**Gathering as a Countervailing Act**," the piece reflects on a three-day retreat this past Juneteenth in Daly City that brought together leaders from Asian American and Latinx churches — including our own Stated Clerk, Rev. Dr. Grace Kaori Suzuki.



Following the retreat, participants walked two miles to a Filipino American Church of the Nazarene in Daly City for a panel discussion with African American leaders, where representatives of all three communities shared how they have come to integrate Christian faith with ancestral heritage, and the difficulty of doing so in predominantly White spaces. We commend it to you at the link below:
newcollegeberkeley.org/blog/2026/8/27/gathering-as-a-countervailing-act

Unity Candle □

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13



First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto

Palo Alto

This Sunday, we recognize First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto as they host the Unity Candle. We ask that you lift up FPCPA's pastor, the Rev. Tom Harris, along with the worship leaders, deacons, and elders who sustain the life and ministry of the congregation.

First Presbyterian describes their own DNA as a deep call to faith, a passionate yearning for justice, and a vigorous intellectual curiosity — qualities evident in worship and in how the congregation shows up beyond its walls. Rev. Harris has said that the church's vision of becoming an intergenerational, multi-ethnic, anti-racist, and

economically diverse community matches his own sense of how the world ought to be.

That vision takes shape in familiar ways: FPCPA is a More Light congregation, a Peace Church since 2016, a Hunger Action Congregation, and an Earth Care Congregation whose members have completed annual Earth Care audits and started a small pollinator garden during the pandemic. Members also organize their service through Presbyterian Engagement Teams, gathering around whatever work they feel called to.

As First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto receives and hosts the Unity Candle this week, we ask our neighboring congregations to hold their pastoral leadership in prayer. May God continue to guide FPCPA as a community of faith, conviction, and care — sharing Christ's love throughout Palo Alto and beyond.

To learn more about this week's congregation, you can visit their website here:
[First Pres. Church of Palo Alto](#)

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

This Week

Rev. Ryan Althaus · Hunger Advocate

Common Roots Presents: Raise the Barn Festival | Saturday at 3:00pm

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*, a family-friendly afternoon of live music, food, art vendors, games, and mor. The event aims to help Common Roots complete its new barn.

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

Event Information:

*Saturday, September 12, from 3:00 pm to
7: 00 pm*

*301 Golf Drive Club
Santa Cruz, CA 95060*



COMMON ROOTS FARM'S
**RAISE THE BARN
FESTIVAL**

SATURDAY
**12
SEPT**
3-7PM

**LIVE MUSIC - FOOD TRUCKS - ART MARKET - BARN
TOURS - SCAVENGER HUNT - FARMSTAND AND MORE!**

Round up the whole family for a fun
afternoon and help us finish our new barn
at Common Roots Farm.

More info about our barn project here:
barn.commonrootsfarm.org

SINGLE TICKET \$15
FAMILY (4) TICKETS \$35



*Western wear encouraged.

Tickets & more info:
COMMONROOTSFARM.ORG/BARNFEST

301 GOLF CLUB DRIVE,
SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060



Yosemite Cabin Camping Adventure October 2–4, 2026 ADA-Accessible Adventures Through Urban Works

Urban Works is again partnering with Camp Krem Yosemite in Ahwahnee, CA, for a weekend of cabin camping just outside Yosemite National Park. Expect ADA-friendly hikes in Yosemite Valley, two nights in accessible cabins, healthy meals, campfire evenings, and plenty of good company. No prior hiking or camping experience is needed, and transportation is provided thanks to Shared Adventures.

No prior hiking or camping experience is needed, and the Urban Works team is familiar with a wide range of accessibility needs. For registration and pricing information, visit the link here: urbanworks-sc.org

For questions, contact Ryan Althaus at ryan@sanjosephy.org.

Pieces on Peace ☮

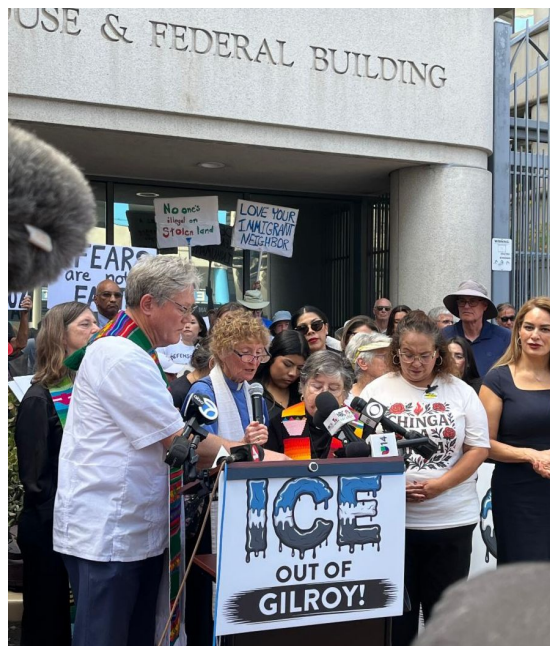
SEPTEMBER EDITION

Veronica Ota · Peacemaking & Justice Advocate

On Tuesday, September 8, a large crowd rallied outside of the Federal Courthouse in San Jose, awaiting an update on the temporary injunction that paused construction on the ICE detention processing center in Gilroy. There were faith leaders from various traditions; local politicians representing Santa Clara and neighboring counties; and representatives from groups like ICE Out of the Bay, Amigos de Guadalupe, PACT, SIREN, cultural groups representing people with Japanese and Filipino backgrounds; and many more. We were a diverse group, but our chant rang true: “The people united, will never be divided!” A formal decision has yet to have been issued, but it seems very likely the judge will order a continued pause on construction, which is good news for the moment.

As a *yonsei* fourth-generation Japanese American, when I participate in these rallies, protests, and vigils against ICE detention, I wonder to myself – who was there protesting when my grandparents’ and great-grandparents’ generations were being rounded up and sent to detention centers? Who prayed for my family when they were

behind barbed wire fences? What concerns me about the current situation is that people are not only being rounded up and confined, but it is happening in **private** detention centers. People, actual people who exist behind the elusive idea of the “corporation,” are **profiting** from separating families and locking people up in deplorable conditions. (You might be one of those people, depending on your investment portfolio. Have you checked?) People are profiting on the outside while people are dying on the inside.



Speaking in the photo above is our own Rev. Dr. Diana Gibson, Pastor Emerita of First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, joined by Madre Anna Lange-Soto, an Episcopal priest, and Father Jon Pedigo of People Acting in Community Together (PACT) Santa Clara. Rev. Erik Swanson and Rev. Hardy Kim of the Presbytery of San José were also among the clergy who took part in the courtroom discussion.

As Christians we are called to welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, visit the imprisoned, do justice and love mercy. Whatever our political leanings, we need to come together as people of faith to figure out how to intervene when undocumented immigrants are being dehumanized as quota numbers and line items in profit margins in an industrialized prison system. We cannot turn a blind eye to a broken immigration system that routinely abuses the most recent rounds of newcomers to this country.

I invite you to join our Peace and Justice Working group for a **Prayer Vigil after our upcoming NEAR Gathering on Saturday, September 26, at the proposed Gilroy ICE processing center.** We will gather at 1:30pm in the Gilroy Presbyterian Church parking lot to carpool to the site for a brief prayer vigil from 2 – 2:30. We need God and we need each other in this moment, and people detained and those who fear it need our solidarity. More information on the vigil will be circulated. Reach out to Veronica@sanjosephby.org for questions, comments, concerns.

Presbyter Reminders

***Leaders of Color '26:
Building Resilience Through Spiritual Practice
Zephyr Point | October 19 – 22***

Registration is now open for this year's Leaders of Color Retreat (Clergy and Commissioned Ruling Elders/Commissioned Pastors included). The annual gathering will be 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@sanjosepby.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.sanjosepby.org

[View as Webpage](#)

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

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email & social marketing for free!