



Presbytery of San José

September 4, 2026

A Little More Care

*When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.*

*I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.*

— Wendell Berry, “The Peace of Wild Things,” *New Collected Poems* (2012)



Dear Friends,

There is something fitting about beginning with words of rest and grace as we remember the late Wendell Berry, who spent his life helping us see the world around us with a little more care. A Kentucky farmer, poet, novelist, and environmental advocate, Berry wrote more than 50 books of poetry, fiction, and essays over six decades. In works like *The Unsettling of America*, he challenged industrial agriculture

and the ways our pursuit of efficiency and profit can come at the expense of the land and the communities that depend on it. He also lived what he wrote, returning to Kentucky to farm and helping inspire the Berry Center, which continues that work by supporting sustainable agriculture, local economies, and rural communities.

What makes Berry's work continue to resonate is that he was never only talking about farming or the environment. He was writing about how we live—with the earth, with our neighbors, and with the ordinary things that sustain us. For Berry, this was also deeply connected to his Christian faith. He resisted the idea that heaven and earth, body and soul, or spiritual life and ordinary life could be neatly separated. The act of caring for creation, in his eyes, was deeply intertwined with our fear of God.

That may be part of why "The Peace of Wild Things" has stayed with so many people. Berry begins with despair and fear, but does not remain there. He goes outside, pays attention, and finds himself resting "in the grace of the world." His faith did not ask him to look away from the world, but to look more closely at it—to see creation as something more than a resource, and ordinary life as something worthy of wonder and deserving of stewardship.

Berry leaves behind more than books and poems. He leaves a way of seeing and a way of living: rooted in a place, attentive to its people, grateful for creation, and willing to care for what cannot be measured by usefulness or profit. His work reminds us to slow down, to notice what is in front of us, and to remember how deeply our lives are connected. Perhaps that is one of the gifts of his life: an invitation to become a little quieter, a little more present, and a little more willing to rest in the grace of the world.

Regards,

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

#CalledToCommunity
#CommittedToJustice

IN THIS ISSUE

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

FEATURED

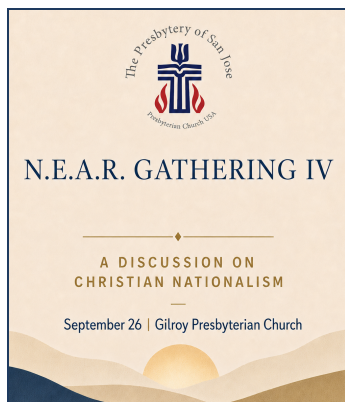
N.E.A.R. Gathering I.V.

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

ADVOCACY

Raise the Barn Festival

Sept 12 · 3–7pm · Common Roots Farm — live music, food, art vendors & more to support the Inclusive Barn Project. [Register & Learn More Here](#)



MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

World Communion Offering: Grants Open Sept. 7

Sep 7, '26 — Jan 15, '27 · Available to all congregations & mid councils engaged in ministries of reconciliation and witness.

[Learn More and Apply Here](#)



UNITY CANDLE

Covenant Pres. Church – Palo Alto

Sunday, Aug 30 · Rev. Jack Cabaness



PRESBYTER REMINDERS

PSJ Fall Clergy Retreat '26:

Oct. 28–29 | San Juan Bautista

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

[Register Now](#)

EP ON THE ROAD

Preaching Sept. 6

Northminster Presbyterian, Salinas (10am)

St. Philip's Presbyterian, Salinas (11:30am) ·

102nd Anniversary Celebration

EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

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)

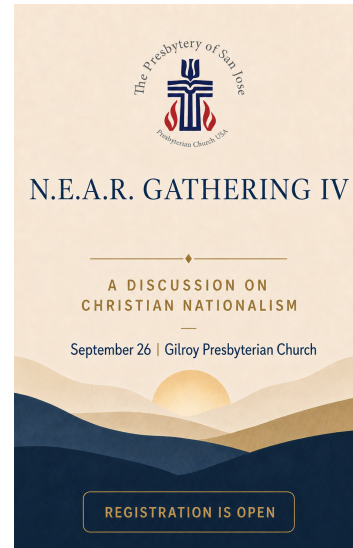
If you would like to invite the EP to guest preach, facilitate a class, lead a retreat, help with strategic visioning/planning, or grab a cup of coffee, email neal@sanjosepby.org or call/text (408) 763-5004.

Featured

NEAR Gathering IV Registration Closes Sept. 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

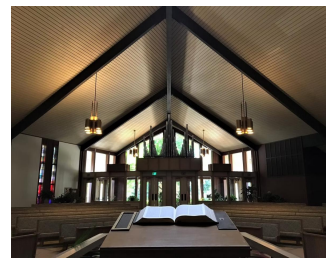
AI & the Church: A Presentation from Aben Das *Presbytery of San José Ordination Candidate Shares Reflections from the AI Church Summit 2026*

Aben Das, a candidate for ordination under care in the Presbytery of San José and a member of Sunnyvale Presbyterian Church, recently participated as a quick talk speaker at the AI Church Summit 2026 in Nashville, TN. The summit brought together leaders from the Presbyterian Church (USA), The Episcopal Church, the ELCA, and the United Methodist Church to explore the theme, “The Agency of the People of God in the Age of AI.”

Aben’s presentation, “The Mirage of Artificial Care: Postmodern Loneliness, Humanoid Robotics, and the Ecclesial Call to Embodied Communion,” reflects on the growing desire for artificial companionship and the Church’s unique calling to foster embodied, relational, and communal care. With Aben’s permission, we invite members of the Presbytery to view his presentation and engage with this timely conversation about faith, technology, and the future of human connection.

Watch Aben’s presentation at the link below:

youtu.be/Q5JPowh2J1w



Covenant Presbyterian Church Palo Alto

This Sunday, we recognize Covenant Presbyterian Church in Palo Alto as they host the Unity Candle. Notably, we ask that you lift up Covenant's Pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jack Cabaness, along with the dedicated worship leaders, deacons, and elders who nurture the life and ministry of the congregation.

Founded in 1951, Covenant is a faithful and diverse church family rooted in the dedication of its members. Beginning as an offshoot of First Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto, the congregation's earliest members purchased land in southern Palo Alto and built their Fellowship Hall as a labor of love. For almost 75 years, Covenant has contributed to the life of the Presbytery of San José and the wider community through leadership, mission, and service.

Today, Covenant continues to live out its calling through ministries that support its neighbors. The congregation houses and supports the South Palo Alto Food Closet, providing a local resource for individuals and families in need. Through its PC(USA) Mental Health Grant, Covenant is also strengthening efforts to reduce stigma and encourage mental and emotional well-being through education, support, and community partnerships. The Covenant Children's Center, a nonprofit childcare and preschool program operating since 1978, remains another vital ministry serving families throughout Palo Alto. Covenant also offers weekly adult education classes, and ongoing social groups like the Presbyterian Women's Circle, Men's Breakfast Group, and a weekly Book Club.

As Covenant Presbyterian Church of Palo Alto receives and hosts the Unity Candle this week, we ask our neighboring congregations to lift up their pastoral leadership in your prayers. May God continue to guide Covenant as a community of faith, compassion, and service—sharing Christ's love throughout Palo Alto and beyond.

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

[Covenant PC – Palo Alto](http://www.covenantpc.org)

Follow the path of the Unity Candle here:

<http://tinyurl.com/SJUnity2025>



***Common Roots Presents:
Raise the Barn Festival
September 12 | 3 – 7 PM***

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

Growing Good: Updates from Our New Worshipping Community

Last week's Westview Yard Sale was a wonderful gathering of Presbytery friends and community members! The gathering served as a meaningful opportunity to support "Good Growth Gardens", our new worshipping community recently validated in conjunction with the Watsonville congregation. Thanks to the generosity of those who shopped, the sale raised \$1,500 to support this new ministry.



Beyond the funds raised, the day offered a chance to build some connections, and introduce others to the vision of Good Growth.

That work will soon enter an exciting new chapter as its soon-to-be installed Pastor, Ms. Veronica Ota will be ordained as a Minister of word and sacrament on Saturday, September 19th! The service will be held at First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara, and all are welcome to gather in celebration and witness. More details to come.

To learn more about Good Growth Garden and other initiatives, visit our advocacy page below: sanjosephby.org/peacemaking-justice-advocacy



Presbyter Reminders



World Communion Offering: Grant Applications Open September 7

World Communion Offering (WCO) grant applications open September 7, 2026, and close January 15, 2027. Grants are available to church councils—including congregations, presbyteries, and synods—engaged in reconciliation ministries aligned with the causes supported by the WCO: racial justice, gender justice, peacemaking, global witness, and ecumenical and interfaith relations. A council does not need to receive the World Communion Offering to be eligible, though each council may submit only one application per year. This is an opportunity for congregations and mid councils to consider which local ministries or projects might align with these priorities.

Applications must be submitted through the PC(USA) grant management system, with additional information about the application process forthcoming. The application should take approximately 15 minutes to complete if the required documentation is prepared. Applications will be reviewed in the first quarter of 2027, with recipients announced shortly thereafter. Base grant awards range from \$500–\$1,000, with funds expected to be used within 12 months of distribution. Congregations and mid councils are encouraged to begin considering potential projects ahead of the September 7 opening.

For more grant information – including required documentation to apply – visit the page [here](#):

Building Resilience Through Spiritual Practice
Leaders of Color Retreat
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



LEADERS OF COLOR 2026
PRESENTS:
**BUILDING RESILIENCE
THROUGH
SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**



REGISTER VIA QR
CODE OR LINK BELOW:



HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/X
BSSEGBNTMXQ7PTB6

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.

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

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

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