



Presbytery of San José

October 2, 2026

"Table Blessing"

*To your table
you bid us come.
You have set the places,
you have poured the wine,
and there is always room,
you say,
for one more.*

*And so we come.
From the streets
and from the alleys
we come.*

*From the deserts
and from the hills
we come.*

*From the ravages of poverty
and from the palaces of privilege
we come.*

*Running,
limping,
carried,
we come.*

*We are bloodied with our wars,
we are wearied with our wounds,
we carry our dead within us,
and we reckon with their ghosts.*

*We hold the seeds of healing,
we dream of a new creation,
we know the things
that make for peace,
and we struggle to give them wings.*

*And yet, to your table
we come.
Hungering for your bread,
we come;
thirsting for your wine,
we come;
singing your song
in every language,
speaking your name*

*in every tongue,
in conflict and in communion,
in discord and in desire,
we come,
O God of Wisdom,
we come*

Prayer © Jan L. Richardson from *In Wisdom's Path: Discovering the Sacred in Every Season*.
janrichardson.com



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This Sunday, October 4, is World Communion Sunday. Christians of all denominations in every corner of the world will gather at the same Table in joint solidarity of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The above prayer – authored by ordained minister Jan Richardson – reminds us who all is invited: the weary and the whole, the privileged and the poor, those carrying wounds and those carrying hope.

This gathering in particular is centered around reconciliation, which extends to the offering itself. Through our participation, the hope is for a brief yet profound opportunity to sit in shared witness of our gifts. Whatever table you find yourself at on Sunday, however present you can allow yourself to be, know that God is already there.

Regards,

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

IN THIS ISSUE

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

FEATURED

ADVOCACY

A Reflection from Saturday's N.E.A.R.

Gathering

Takeaways from Keynote Speakers & A
Timely Offering · [Watch Livestream Here](#)



Greenfaith: A Conversation on Clean Air

Oct 6 · 6:00pm · [Register for Zoom Here](#)



PRESBYTER REMINDERS

SURVEY: Did You Attend Saturday's N.E.A.R. event?

We want your Feedback...

[Take Survey Here](#)

Fall Clergy Retreat Announced: "Pits & Wells"

Oct 28 & 29 · San Juan Bautista ·

[Register Here](#)



UNITY CANDLE

St. Andrews Pres. – Aptos

Sunday, October 4 · Rev. Anne McAnelly



MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT

Attend the Commissioning of Rev. Veronica Toyomi Ota

Oct 31 · 10:00am · All are invited · [Register & View Info Here](#)

EP ON THE ROAD

Preaching at First Pres. Church of Mountain View

Oct. 4 · Then Attending the retirement for Rev. Dennis Woodsmall at First. Pres Church of Santa Clara



RESOURCES

2027 Presbytery Meetings & Gatherings Schedule •

Now Available

View all meeting dates & formats for the upcoming year · See "*Meetings & Gatherings*"
Section Below

EP's Upcoming Travels & Preaching/Speaking

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

October 19-22: Co-facilitating Annual Leaders of Color Retreat; Zephyr Point
Conference Center, NV

October 28-29: attending Presbytery Clergy Retreat at St Francis Conference Center,
San Juan Bautista

October 31: Attending the Commissioning of the Rev. Veronica Toyomi Ota at
Westview Presbyterian Church (10:00 am)

November 15-25: World Council of Churches Executive Committee, Manila,
Philippines

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

Meetings & Gatherings Schedule for 2027

The Coordinating Council has confirmed the 2027 schedule for Presbytery business meetings and NEAR Gatherings, as well as the related formats and topics.

PRESBYTERY BUSINESS MEETINGS

Sat., Feb. 27 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. — In person, with option to attend virtually • Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church

Thu., April 22 • 5–6:30 p.m. — Zoom • *Book of Order* amendments only

Sat., Oct. 30 • 9–11 a.m. — Zoom

COORDINATING COUNCIL MEETINGS

Thu., Feb. 4 • 5–7 p.m. — Zoom

Thu., April 22 • 6:30–7:30 p.m.* — Zoom

Thu., Oct. 7 • 5–6:30 p.m. — Zoom

NEAR GATHERINGS

Sat., May 1 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. — NEAR Gathering V: *Artificial Intelligence and Faith* • In person • Presbyterian Church of Los Gatos

Sat., Sept. 25 • 9 a.m.–1 p.m. — NEAR Gathering VI • In person, location TBD • Tentative guest: Co-Moderator(s) of the 227th General Assembly

TOWN HALLS

Wed., Jan. 27 • 5–6 p.m. — Topic: Presbytery Office (890 Meridian property, staff turnover, payroll provider) • Zoom

Sat., Feb. 27 • 1:30–2:30 p.m.* — Topic: Salty Sheep (boat) • In person, with option to attend virtually • Santa Teresa Hills Presbyterian Church

*JUST ANNOUNCED

March 2027 • Dates TBD — Informational Webinar(s) Topic: *Book of Order* Amendments (in preparation for April 22 Presbytery meeting) • Zoom

Sat., May 1 • 1:30–3 p.m.* — Topic: Watsonville Public House • In person, location TBD (option to attend virtually may be offered)

STILL TO COME • FALL 2026

Wed.–Fri., Oct. 7–9 — Synod of the Pacific Assembly • Zephyr Point Conference Center, South Lake Tahoe

Fri., Oct. 23 • 6:30–8:00 p.m.— Proposed 2027 budget & Proposed Ethical Conduct Policy • Zoom

Thu., Nov. 5 • 5–6:30 p.m. — Presbytery Business Meeting • Zoom

Questions? Contact EP Neal Presa at neal@sanjosephby.org.



NURTURE • EDUCATE • ADVOCATE • RESOURCE

What We Heard at the 4th N.E.A.R. Gathering

Keynotes by Drs. Carter and Reichel; offering for CAB and Amigos de Guadalupe

This past Sunday, folks from across the presbytery gathered at Gilroy Presbyterian Church bright and early for our fourth NEAR Gathering, ushering in the day's conversations with worship from Gilroy's very own Rev. Trevor Van Laar. The day's theme of Christian nationalism proved to evoke diverse perspectives that carried through the 277th General Assembly.

Dr. Heath Carter grounded us in history, tracing how faith and national identity have been bound together in American life, and who has paid the price. His reminder: behaviors that shun and exclude only make the vulnerable more vulnerable. Dr. Hanna Reichel, also of Princeton Theological Seminary, turned to the practical question of how the church responds. Among her many resonant points, Dr. Reichel argued that when we label those around us as fascists, we may be feeding the very threat we want to resist. Together, they named the problem honestly and grounded it in the context of our ministry of God's message.

The conversation didn't stay at the podium. In breakout groups and a town hall-style conversation with our Executive Presbyter, our own ministers and elders spoke to how

these issues are playing out in their congregations and worshipping communities.

The day also put that conversation into practice. Rev. Veronica Ota, our newly ordained Peacemaking and Justice Minister, alongside the Mission and Outreach Working Group (MAOWG), dedicated the offering to the Community Action Board (CAB) and Amigos de Guadalupe. Both mission partners, the two organizations have been actively protecting and accompanying our immigrant neighbors across the South Bay and beyond. (MAOWG still has grant funds available; learn more on our website under "Forms.")

That afternoon, a group of attendees carried the day's witness just minutes away from the church to the latest proposed ICE detention site. There, Rev. Ota led a prayer vigil for those detained, separated from family, living in fear, or lost in detention.

NEAR began in 2025 with support from the Anne Penke Fund of the Synod of the Pacific and your per capita and mission giving. Thank you to Gilroy Presbyterian Church for hosting, to our speakers, and to everyone who came.

SURVEY:

Attended? Help Shape Future Gatherings

We'd love to hear from you. Our short feedback survey takes about three minutes, and your answers will help shape the topics and format of future gatherings:

TAKE SURVEY HERE



Fall Clergy Retreat • "Pits & Wells"

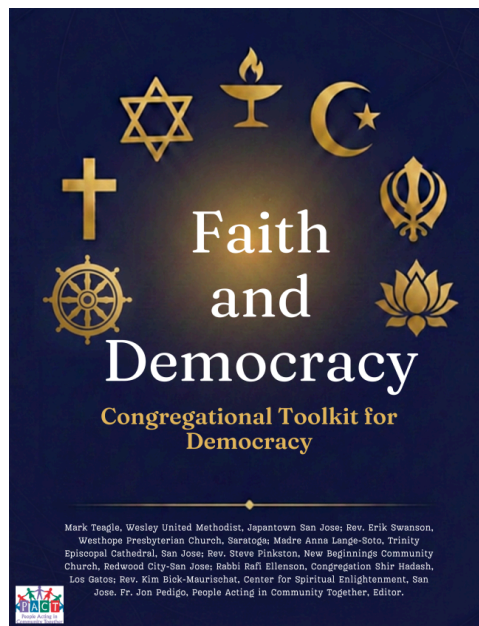
Wed, Oct. 28 & Thurs, Oct. 29

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 year's gathering, themed "Pits and Wells," will be guided by spiritual director Rev. Fred Harrell, who serves as transitional pastor of Stone Church – Willow Glen. Additionally, the time will allow 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



Midterm Voting Resources

Faith & Democracy Toolkit • P.A.C.T. Info Meeting

The Rev. Erik Swanson, the social justice committee at Westhope Presbyterian Church in Saratoga, and their interfaith partners have authored "Faith and Democracy: Congregational Toolkit for Democracy." The toolkit has four self-standing modules that walk a group through how our democracy works, the challenges facing it, what it means to be an informed voter, and practical next steps a congregation can take together. With the midterms approaching, it is a ready-made tool for sessions, adult education classes, and small groups looking to stay informed and engaged.

View and download the resource at the link here:

[Faith & Democracy Congregational Toolkit](#)

Building on this work, PACT is inviting church leaders to join us on Thursday October 1st for an orientation to the Voting is Sacred campaign as we prepare for the midterm elections. With anxiety running high about the elections we are trying to prepare congregations for what some of the issues are, what they can do, and how they can organize. This is on line only.

If you have questions please call Rev. Erik Swanson at 408-916-8808. The zoom link is included. The zoom link for October 1st meeting can be found below:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/98682996022?pwd=N2liNWlxV3VhQ050WTRUN1dyYTVRdz09>

This Week



A Conversation About Clean Air

Greenfaith: What Bay Area Faith Leaders Need to Know
October 6 • 6:00–7:30 PM • via Zoom

Clean air is a matter of health, justice, and care for our neighbors. Join faith leaders and people of conscience from across the Bay Area for an accessible, one-hour conversation about important new clean-air standards, why they matter for our communities, and how people of faith can make their voices heard. No policy expertise needed! Learn more & register:

Register below:

actionnetwork.org/events/faith-for-clean-air-what-bay-area-faith-leaders-need-to-know/

Can't attend? You can still add your name to a letter supporting strong clean-air standards for the Bay Area:

actionnetwork.org/petitions/protect-the-bay-areas-clear-air-standards?source=direct_link&

Questions? Contact the organizers at info@greenfaith.org

HUNGER ADVOCACY • REV RYAN ALTHAUS



Meet the Hands that Feed Us

Open Farm Tours in Santa Cruz • Oct. 10 & 11

Get to know the farmers who feed our communities at this year's Open Farm Tours! On Saturday, Oct. 10, visit South County farms including Live Earth Farm, Esperanza Community Farms, and Blossom's Biodynamic Farm; on Sunday, Oct. 11, head north to Swanton Berry Farm, Homeless Garden Project, and more. All participating farms are organic and committed to sustainable practices, and each offers a chance to learn how a healthy regional food system can nourish both people and land.

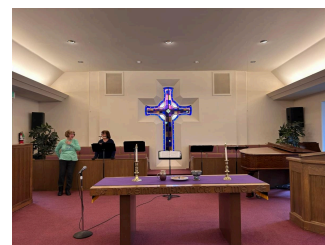
Tour at your own pace between 10am and 4pm. A Friends & Family Pass covers up to five people per carload for both days for just \$25. Learn more and get tickets here:

www.openfarmtours.com/

For questions, contact info@openfarmtours.com, or reach Ryan directly at ryan@sanjosepby.org.

Unity Candle □

SUNDAY, OCT. 4



St. Andrews Presbyterian Church

APTOS

This week, we invite you to pray for St. Andrew Presbyterian Church of Aptos alongside their pastor, the Rev. Anne McAnelly, and all who lead and serve this congregation as they continue to nurture a welcoming, community along the Central Coast.

St. Andrew was chartered by the Presbytery of San José on May 16, 1965, when 96 charter members gathered at Cabrillo College. For more than 60 years since, it has been a place of worship and fellowship in Aptos. Pastor Anne has served the congregation since 2011. Today, St. Andrew describes itself as a welcoming, affirming, and multi-generational community that strives to live justly, show kindness, and walk humbly with God.

That faith shows up in action. St. Andrew founded the Mid-County Homeless Coalition, partnering with local churches to offer showers and basic supplies to unhoused neighbors, and members volunteer with Second Harvest Food Bank. Their care also reaches well beyond Santa Cruz County through a longstanding ecumenical partnership with communities in El Salvador, building relationships and supporting education, medical care, and clean water.

Worship remains at the heart of their life together. The congregation gathers Sundays at 10:30 a.m. for traditional worship rich in collaborative spirit, with lay leaders and children sharing in leadership each week.

We invite our presbytery members to hold Pastor Anne, the Session, and the people of St. Andrew in prayer this week, giving thanks for more than six decades of faithful witness and asking that they continue to be a place of welcome, worship, and service for Aptos and beyond.

For more information about this week's congregation(s), visit the links below:

www.aptospresbyterianchurch.org/

To follow the path of our Unity Candle, visit the link below:

<http://tinyurl.com/SJUnity2025>

Pieces on Peace 

PEACE & JUSTICE MINISTER • REV VERONICA OTA



Join Us in Commissioning
Rev. Veronica Toyomi Ota
Peacemaking and Justice Minister
Sat., Oct. 31 • 10 a.m. • Westview Pres. Church

Please join friends, family, and members of the Presbytery of San José as we celebrate the commissioning of Rev. Veronica Toyomi Ota as Peacemaking and Justice Minister. This call affirms the ministry of peace and justice she has already been living out among us. Veronica will also serve as the ordained pastor of Good Growth Gardens, Watsonville's new worshipping community. It is an inclusive, intergenerational space that nurtures faith and community alongside food and nature. Come share in this joyful day of worship, and stay for the reception that follows. We ask that you RSVP by Friday, Oct. 16. More info can be found at the link below:

RSVP HERE

Save the Date



**LEADING CHANGE
AND TRANSFORMATION**
CONTINUING EDUCATION INSTITUTE

Now, more than ever, our communities need faithful expressions of justice, liberation, and love. But how do we know if our well-meaning actions and offerings are **making a difference**? If what we are doing matters in our lives and in the world, we must develop meaningful ways to measure effectiveness, in order to lead change and transformation.

The week will give you **practical tools** to unpack the needs of your community, honestly assess your resources, and imagine ways ministries and programs can be **more effective** for those we serve. The retreat is designed for all church leaders – pastors, educators, elders, lay leaders, and church professionals.



Larissa Kwong Alvarado



Jen James



Chip Low



Shari McInnis

Dates
October 25-30, 2026

Location
Zephyr Point Conference Center

REGISTER

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:

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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