



FIRST PALO ALTO
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

INSIGHTS

SEPTEMBER 2025

Football Fun Day at Stanford Sept. 27

by Pamela Cutkosky

Family Ministries has a block of tickets to the Stanford vs. San Jose State football game Saturday, Sept. 27, at Stanford Stadium. Join your church family for a fun afternoon of football and fellowship!

Root for the Cardinal under new coach Frank Reich, or root for the San Jose State Spartans, coached by Ken Niumatalolo. Stanford and San Jose State have not played each other since 2013. This rivalry is known as the Bill Walsh Legacy Game to honor the former Stanford coach and San Jose State grad.



Stanford

vs.



San Jose St.

It's also Cardinal Kids Day, so there will be pre-game activities for kids at Fan Fest and lots of swag! Plus, Stanford will introduce its 2025 Athletics Hall of Fame class.

See Pam Cutkosky for a free ticket in our block of seats. ♦



Rally Day Kicks Off a New Ministry Year

by Pastor Gerardo and Pamela Cutkosky

Rally Day is Sept. 7. That's the first Sunday in September after Labor Day and it's communion Sunday, as well. We are excited to invite you to join us for this

joyful celebration marking the beginning of a new ministry year for our church.

We'll welcome back kids to Sunday school in the Rainbow room with Pastor Gerardo and teachers Juana and Irene.

We'll welcome back our Chancel Choir under the direction of Mark Shaull.

We'll welcome Rev. Karen Paulsen to the pulpit, as Pastor Burke continues his renewal leave.

After worship, we'll serve a light lunch on the patio.

Our various ministry groups will have tables on the patio with displays and materials about their fall programming.

Families, please find the information table for details about this year's Sunday school curriculum. It will be a wonderful opportunity to hear about the lessons, stories, and activities planned to help our kids grow in faith.

Also take time to meet Juana and Irene, our dedicated Sunday School assistants as well as the caring team who will be with the little ones in the nursery while parents are in worship. We are so thankful for their love and commitment to walking alongside our children and families.

Whether you are returning or joining us for the first time, Rally Day is a great moment to connect or reconnect, celebrate, and step into a new season of learning and growing together. Come one, come all with your questions and your excitement—we can't wait to see you there!

Need more information? See Pastor Gerardo, Worship Chair Linda Grossman, or Seasonal Events Coordinator Pam Cutkosky. ♦

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When Kindness Became the New Cool:

Lessons for Today from John Wesley

Excerpts from an article by David Beidel in the *Tri-State Voice*,
August 4, 2020

In the 18th century, most of Europe was on fire. Bloody civil wars and revolutions were decimating nation after nation. Unrestrained injustice, government and Church corruption, slave trade and the oppression of the poor created a powder keg for violence. Miraculously, Great Britain escaped the horrors of civil war and the brutal savagery that revolutionary anarchy engenders.

Few ancient monarchies are still in place today. The mystery of the UK's capacity to honor the old guard, while raising up a more democratic system without a revolution, is a sociological wonder. Many credit the Great Awakening, in particular the Methodist movement launched by John Wesley, for this extraordinary and peaceful transition.

Methodism unleashed an army of “little Christs” all over Europe. They cared for the poor, took in unwanted and abused children, fought unjust laws and labor conditions, visited prisoners, and battled against slavery. They joined hands with the Apostles and “turned the world upside down.” Eventually compassion became fashionable.

In these troubling days, there is much we can learn from John Wesley and the Methodists. He positively impacted England and most of the Western world mainly because of these three things:

- He persistently and passionately preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ... He traveled over 250,000 miles, mostly on horseback throughout the United Kingdom, sharing the good news to the poorest of the poor in fields and outside coal mines.
- He gave his converts dignity by teaching them the truth. ... Gin, prostitution, violence, slave trade and appalling corruption in the church and government created one of the worst urban environments Europe had ever seen. Nevertheless, Wesley gave the lowest class in England dignity, honoring them as the children of God.

He quickly conferred leadership over the rapidly forming small groups of new converts. They were unified in their desire to: “avoid evil, do good, and grow spiritually by the grace of God.” He did not plan to launch a social reform movement but years later realized that these transformed souls forged a transformed world.

- He taught that faith without works—of compassion and justice—was dead. He never fell into the trap of separating preaching the Gospel and doing good for society. The cumulative effect of this grassroots movement accomplished peaceable reform by providing a vehicle for nonviolent change through the multiplication of humanitarian services to the old, the poor, children and the disabled.

The biblical teaching of Wesley flourished, launching a compassion revolution that pushed a nation—that should have erupted in flames—off the cliff of revolution and onto a robust course of meaningful reformation. Mercy and social justice became popular. “Kindness became the new cool.” *continued on page 4*



John Wesley preaching from a Market Cross. *Painting by William Hatherell (1855-1928). Courtesy John Wesley's House & the Museum of Methodism*

Join Us for Peaceful Protests in the Area

by Nancy Glaser, Social Action Committee chair

A growing group of our congregation has joined in the well-planned protests against the actions of our current U.S. administration. We are protesting the anti-democratic and inhumane policies, cuts to our social safety nets, elimination of entire federal programs and departments, as well as illegal anti-immigration activities.

#SOLIDARITYSEPTEMBER

LABOR DAY 2025

The next National Protest is Sept. 1, Labor Day. See the e-news or contact me for details, glasernancy@gmail.com.

As more harmful policies have been growing, the number and size of the peaceful protests have grown around the country. The Tesla Takedown was first, which had a very strong anti-Elon Musk effect.

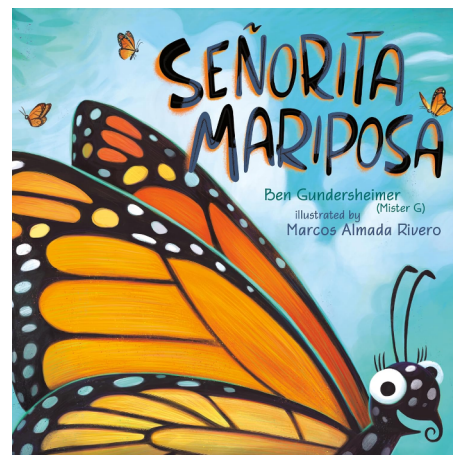
NO KINGS Day attracted more than 10 million protestors across the country. Protesting can make a difference to the leaders of countries. Once the percentage of protestors hits 3.5% of the population, it is said that change occurs. Those in charge can no longer ignore the numbers.

Another benefit of protesting is that we, as individuals, have power in numbers. It is a joyous activity and whether you attend alone or with friends, everyone is welcome. Instant friendships are made with other like-minded Americans.

We will keep the congregation informed of upcoming protests. If you have questions, I invite you to speak to those of us who are participating in these protests.



These three guys love celebrating their 10 year age differences (L to R): Rick Allen, 70, Lou Bellardo, 80, Allen Wood, 90. Photo by Patty Bellardo



Hello, First Palo Alto Readers!

by Char Cutkosky

Welcome Hispanic Heritage Month with one of our newest children's books, *Señorita Mariposa*, by Ben Gundersheimer, illustrated by Marcos Almada Rivero. *Señorita Mariposa* follows the annual migration of the monarch butterfly from Canada to Mexico, stopping over in states like our own California.

The story of *Señorita Mariposa* ("Miss Butterfly") is told in rhyming verse in this Spanish-English bilingual edition. As Mariposa flies, she passes over sites of great natural beauty in Canada, the US, and Mexico, giving a shout out to different habitats and national parks.

Gundersheimer, under the stage name "Mr. G," is a Latin Grammy-winning musician and environmental advocate.

We have many new picture books and beginner chapter books to welcome the new school year, so be sure to drop by the library and check them out! ❖

Kindness Cool *from page 2*

Wesley's peers and protégés abolished slave trade, passed labor laws for children and adults, and radically served the desperately poor, helping them to transition into a healthy, noble middle class with political influence that accelerated proper reform.

Between the passionate work of the people of God and the good will of the populace, the government was forced to enact vital reforms that eventually set the standard for all civil and just nations. ❖

September Worship Schedule

Pastor Burke's renewal leave continues through September. Please welcome these guest speakers to the pulpit this month.

Sept. 7	Communion and Rally Day Message: Clay or stone in God's hands Rev. Karen Paulsen Scripture: Jeremiah 18:1-11
Sept. 14	Message: They will know we are Christians by our love Brenda Birrell Scripture: John 13:34-35
Sept. 21	Message: Can you hear me now? Pamela Cutkosky Scripture: Luke 15:1-10
Sept. 28	Message: What you sow is what you reap Rev. Sepuloni Feleunga Scripture: Luke 16:19-31



A good time was had by all July 12 at "Road Trip" Vacation Bible School. The theme was Joshua 1:9: The Lord your God is with you wherever you go. The day was filled with Bible stories, music, crafts, and games.

Green Notes

by Nancy Olson

From batteries to fluorescent bulbs, there are many items that require responsible disposal due to their hazardous materials and potential harm to our environment. Paint, cleaners, automotive oil, pesticides and fertilizers, medications, and so many more items are hazardous waste and cannot be placed into your curbside collection carts. Palo Alto residents have convenient weekly access to the Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Station on Saturdays from 9-11 a.m.

Find the location, operating hours, a comprehensive list of accepted items, and other HHW Station details at cityofpalalto.org/hazwaste.

With massive plastic use comes massive plastic pollution. Here is just how serious our plastic pollution problem has become:

#1. Plastic waste outweighs people.

Each year, the United States produces 35.7 million tons of plastic waste. That is equivalent to more than 200 pounds of plastic waste for every single man, woman and child in America. With so much plastic being produced, you might wonder about the plan for disposing of it all. The answer: There isn't one.

#2. More than 91% of plastic is burned, thrown into landfills or tossed into our environment.

Plastic producers often create the impression that most plastic is recycled. However the vast majority of plastic ends up in incinerators, landfills, or other parts of the environment, instead of recycling facilities. Many types of plastic, such as PVC piping, plastic bags and polystyrene foam are difficult to recycle and generally not accepted by curbside recycling programs.

#3. Almost half of all plastic is designed for single-use purposes.

Our over-reliance on single-use plastic—plastic designed to be used once then thrown out—is one of the reasons that so much plastic ends up as pollution. If we use plastic—a substance that lasts basically forever—to create sandwich bags and candy wrappers, then we are creating centuries of waste for almost no benefit (except to the producer).

Please think of this before purchasing and using single-use plastic.

Editor's note: People took sandwiches and snacks for lunch at work and school long before plastic sandwich bags became ubiquitous. You can figure out what to use instead of single-use plastic bags! ❖

Holy Interruptions

Most of us are pretty good at planning—schedules, to-do lists, calendars filled to the brim. But what happens when God steps in with an unexpected detour?

Throughout scripture, God often moved in the interruptions. Moses was tending sheep when he saw a burning bush. Mary was simply living her life when an angel appeared. Even Jesus was frequently “interrupted” by people seeking healing or hope—and He never turned them away.

“Interruptible faith” is a posture of openness. It’s saying, “Lord, here’s my plan—but I trust Yours more.” It means slowing down, paying attention, and being willing to let God rearrange our day for His greater purpose.

Proverbs 16:9 (NIV) reminds us, *“In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps.”*

May we have the courage to let Him. ❖ *from ChurchArt.com*

Interruptions [in general] can be viewed as sources of irritation or opportunities for service, as moments lost or experience gained, as time wasted or horizons widened. They can annoy us or enrich us, get under our skin or give us a shot in the arm, monopolize our minutes or spice our schedules—depending on our attitude toward them.

—William Arthur Ward

UWF CONNECTIONS by Nancy Olson

- El Camino Real District United Women in Faith Annual Gathering and Celebration will be Saturday, Sept. 27, 10:00 a.m. at Watsonville UMC. Details at ecrduwf.org/ecrd-uwf-annual-celebration-2025/.

I encourage you to explore [United Women in Faith Digital](http://UnitedWomeninFaithDigital.org) website. There are many opportunities and interest groups, classes, and purely social events.

I frequently sign up for a webinar that interests me. It is fascinating for me to be in break-out rooms to discuss a particular question with a small group of women from different states. The webinars have had a total attendance of 250 to 1250, then several break-out rooms of 6 to 8 women, usually a different mix at each break-out. I am often the only west coast representative in these smaller groups. Very educational.

Other news of interest:

- Bible Study: Embracing God's Call, a Bible study on diversity, equity, and inclusion led by Dr. Faye Wilson and Ellen Lipsey on five Wednesdays, Sept. 10, 17, 24, Oct. 1, 8 at 4:00-5:30 p.m. PT. This study was written by the General Commission on Religion and Race of the United Methodist Church. I have registered for this study. See me for registration information.
- Faith Talks is a podcast with Jennifer R. Farmer. See uwfaith.org/resources/podcasts/ for details. The Aug. 7 episode, Immigration and Loving Our Neighbors, considers how our faith informs our understanding of immigration and our neighbors. Listening to this episode will help you reflect on this issue. Other previously recorded episodes are also available.
- From the UWF Office of Economic and Environmental Justice, an invitation to work to advance climate justice: Join [Just Energy 4 All](http://JustEnergy4All.org) and spread the word about our Just Energy 4 All events. Everyone is welcome to join. ❖



Results of the Demo Farm Project in Tanzania

by Nancy Glaser

In August, I returned from the third trip of my USAID/IESC (i.e., International Executive Service Corps) assignment in Tanzania with the AMCO'S Farm Cooperative. I volunteered starting in August 2024, followed up in January 2025, and finished up on this trip (without USAID assistance).

My assignment was to analyze both the Farm Cooperative financial model and individual small farmer's annual yield based on reports of failure to provide a living for the 500 farm member families. We found on the first trip that the average farm (3 acres) was planted without the use of fertilizer, fungicide, and quality seeds. The farmers could not afford these critical inputs.

In January we created a Demo Farm project with 20 farmers using just one of their three acres and added the recommended inputs that would create a yield in excess of 4-5 times their current yield. I ran the business model using the increased input costs and the increased yields. It showed a significant increase of income. In fact, it could cover the next year's input costs and still result in a significant increase in their living income. We met with the recommended fertilizer manufacturer who provided training to all the farmers to ensure the project would be successful.

On this current trip, we saw the results of our Demo Farm project. Drought has affected most of East Africa and unfortunately, the lack of rain at a critical time during the growth season negatively affected the yield outcomes. However, the acres that did not have the added critical inputs of fertilizer, fungicide, and quality seeds had very low yields in proportion to higher yields in the Demo Farm acres. We reported that the added critical inputs created the multiplier effect we had expected.

Thank you to the church members who supported me in this project.



Above: Preparing acreage. Below: Fertilizer use training.



Irrigation from Lake Victoria

The Geita Gold Mining Company operates in this Lake Victoria area and has been a big supporter of the farming communities. We met with them on my first trip and they expressed an interest in providing irrigation for a large region that would affect thousands of farmers. This would provide adequate water for the crops and allow two plantings a year. We encouraged them and offered to help via USAID or other international funders.

The Irrigation Feasibility Study is just about complete and the Geita Gold Mining company will lead the \$3.5 million project, partnering with the Tanzanian government and others. ❖

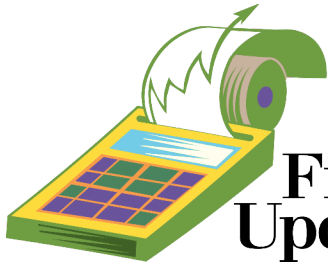


SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES AND BIRTHDAYS

09/02/1965 Bud & Judy Butrill
 09/04/1982 Rick & Trish Riley
 09/06/1975 Patty & Lou Bellardo
 09/08/2013 Ann & Michael Reddick
 09/14/2019 Chuck Roberts & Tyler Badgley
 09/15/1979 Rick & Diane Allen
 09/15/2018 Patrick & Coreen Riley
 09/21/2024 Ana Espinoza & Gerardo Garcia Palacios

09/01 Elsa Nimmo
 09/01 Tanya Buxton
 09/02 Caroline Bowker
 09/03 Jill Perry
 09/03 Graeme Crangle-Hall
 09/04 Chuck Roberts
 09/05 Annie Edwards
 09/06 Coral Baglin
 09/06 Annette Rahn
 09/07 Bernice Smoll
 09/08 Jill Kispert
 09/08 Chad Yoshikawa
 09/11 Stephen Black
 09/14 Will Buxton

09/16 Mark Cutkosky
 09/16 Linda Suzuki
 09/19 Jim Gibbons
 09/19 William Hickman
 09/20 Emma Keep
 09/21 Patricia Collman
 09/21 Sally Irizarry
 09/23 Ben Hickman
 09/26 Sara Salsbury
 09/28 Sandra Wilson
 09/28 Karen Paulsen
 09/29 Ellery Price
 09/29 Owen Price
 09/30 Bob Chatfield



Finance Update

The Finance Committee thanks you for your generous and gracious support and requests that you continue to keep your pledges current. Please direct inquiries to Lou Bellardo: lou@bellardo.com.

July 2025 Income and Expense Summary	July 2025 Actual	Actual YTD 2025	Budget YTD 2025	Budget Annual 2025
Income				
Member Giving	38,139	241,493	192,887	426,040
Income from All Other Sources	47,628	398,683	192,738	349,207
Total Income	85,767	640,176	385,625	775,247
Expenses				
Conference Tithe	8,421	51,547	38,704	73,000
Council on Ministries	2,356	14,951	21,659	41,450
Staff Parish Relations	41,943	290,026	303,872	518,669
Office and Finance	1,682	11,263	12,431	21,400
Board of Trustees	12,792	115,995	127,196	198,100
Total Expenses	67,195	483,781	503,863	852,619
Receipts Over (Under) Expenses	18,573	156,395	-118,238	-77,372
Offset from 2024 Surplus	6,448	45,134	45,134	77,372
Net Over (Under) after Offset	25,021	201,528	-73,105	0



Monday–Friday, La Comida, 11–1 p.m., ongoing

- 1 Labor Day. Church office closed.
Peaceful Protest. See e-news for details.
- 2 Staff Parish Relations, 7 p.m. (Zoom)
- 7 Rally Day
- 9 Trustees, 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)
- 15 Centennial Endowment Funds grant applications due, 4 p.m.
- 16 Finance, 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)
- 20 Deadline for October issue of Insights
- 27 El Camino District Annual Gathering and Celebration (off site), 10:30 a.m. (See below.)
Registration required. Sign up [here](#).



Our electronic giving page is always open! Give with a few clicks at firstpaloalto.com/giving or text Give to 1-650-376-6784 for a link with instructions. Your generosity makes our mission possible. Thank you!



WEEKLY SCHEDULE

→ **Masks are optional but recommended for in-person activities.** Some activities meet online via Zoom, as noted. See e-news for details.

→ Church office hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Doors are kept locked. Please phone the office or ring the electronic door bell to be admitted. **Masks are recommended.**

Sundays

- 10:00 a.m. Sunday School for ages 4-11
- 10:45 a.m. Worship, in person and live-streamed. Check firstpaloalto.com or Friday e-news for the link.
- 11:45 a.m. Snack 'n Chat
- 12:15 p.m. Couples Group (1st & 3rd Sundays)
- 12:15 p.m. Bible Study (2nd & 4th Sundays)
- 5:00 p.m. Fellowship Friends (schedule varies)

Mondays

- 7:00 p.m. Social Action movie discussions (Zoom) See e-news for details.
- 7:00 p.m. Fiume di Musica rehearsal
- 7:15 p.m. Bible Study (Zoom)

Tuesdays

- Noon Current Affairs Fellowship (Zoom)

Wednesdays

- 5:00 p.m. Covenant Class (Zoom)
- 7:00 p.m. Upstream Contemporary Worship (Zoom)

Thursdays

- 1:00 p.m. Call to Prayer
- 7:00 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal

Information for the next issue of the Insights newsletter is due Sept. 20.

Photos of church events are accepted at any time. Include photographer's name, date of the photo, and a brief description of the event. Everything is subject to editing. Please send your submissions via email to Insights Editor Michele W. Conway: insightsfirstpa@gmail.com or bring them to the church office. Thank you!



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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PALO ALTO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Next INSIGHTS deadline: Sept. 20

