



NOVEMBER 2025



Multifaith Events

Peaceful Presence

Tuesday, Nov. 11, at 7 p.m.

Peaceful Presence is a monthly gathering time to reflect on reconciliation and goodwill in our world. It will meet in our sanctuary this month.

All are welcome to come and share a brief time of reflection, meditation, and prayer developed by MultiFaith Voices for Peace and Justice. ❖

Multifaith Worship in Honor of Thanksgiving

Sunday, Nov. 23, at 4 p.m.

Celebrate gratitude and the spirit. Pastor Burke will lead a special worship to share universal religion's view of thankfulness and the divine. Scripture, prayers and sacred songs will be lifted in celebration of the many holy paths of gratitude. Worship will take place in the chapel and be an hour or less. ❖

Suggest Organizations for Joy of Giving

by Nancy Glaser, Chair, Social Action Committee

The Social Action Committee is preparing for the 2025 Joy of Giving campaign. The committee selects six local, regional, or international nonprofit organizations to be listed in the Joy of Giving brochure. The brochure will familiarize you with the organizations selected so that you can choose any that you wish to support with a donation this holiday season.

The congregation is asked to suggest organizations for inclusion in the Joy of Giving brochure. The committee's preferred criteria are:

- A qualified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization
- An organization you can vouch for as a donor, board member, or volunteer
- A small nonprofit organization where our collective donation can make a real difference

If you have an organization for the committee to consider, please send the organization contact information, your affiliation, and a link to its website to glasernancy@gmail.com by the closing date of Nov. 10.



The Joy of Giving brochure will be included in your bulletin starting in late November. It will describe the work of the nonprofit organizations selected by the committee and provide instructions for allocating your financial gifts. All gifts are tax deductible.

Joy of Giving has been a Christmas tradition at our church for many years. It is an opportunity to show Christ's love both to people in our local community and the world beyond.

Consider giving a gift in honor of someone on your Christmas list. This makes a very thoughtful gift! ❖

625 Hamilton Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94301-2016

650-323-6167 info@firstpaloalto.com
www.FirstPaloAlto.com

Pastor's Corner



Fruit and vegetable seller at harvest time, Franz Hals, 1630

Dear friends,

Welcome to November! We begin with a seasonal selection on the autumnal time of All Hallowtide from Cynthia Bourgeault, Christian teacher, and mystic. October 31 through November 2 are most important, for they form a Triduum, usually applied to those great three days that are the heart of the Holy Week celebration: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the great Vigil of Easter. (*Triduum* means three days.) However, the autumn Triduum are the three days encompassing Halloween (October 31), All Saints Day (November 1), and All Souls Day (November 2). Though Halloween is by and large celebrated only

as a secular holiday and All Saints and All Souls are relatively unknown, they do comprise their own sacred passage and a powerful mirror-image of the energy flowing through the spring Triduum.

Both spring and fall Triduums deal with the passage from death to life, which is at the heart of the mystical path, of all spiritual paths. In the spring Triduum, the days are lengthening, the earth is springing forth with new life, and resurrection energy is already coursing through everything in the physical universe.

In the fall Triduum, the movement is more inward, against the grain. The days are shortening, the leaves are falling, and the earth draws once again into itself. Everything in the natural world confronts us with reminders of our own mortality. In this dark and inward season, there is little that encourages us to somersault over death right into resurrection; we must linger in the dark and allow the dawning recognition of how fragile we are.

Yet amid this broody season of dark inwardness, the days do offer themselves as a journey, a progression we can take. Halloween, that great druidic celebration, is often lost in excess and revelry. But if you pay attention, it is asking us to acknowledge the false self, to let the “ghoulies and ghosties, long leggity beasties, and things that go bump in the night,” frolic as they will with no cause for alarm. Once we have faced that shadow, we are free on November 1 to move into that exquisite and subtle taste of the glory to come, the mystical communion of saints. All Saints is the thinnest of the thin places between heaven and earth, where the boundaries between this world and the next are accessible. Where all we have loved but lost, all we have grieved for, all the roads not taken in our lives, are found again in their joyful mystery.

From there, we are invited on November 2 to return to our human condition and particularity; to acknowledge and grieve the people who have left our lives (family, friends, helpers and lovers), to prepare ourselves to live more deeply and courageously the strange journey that we humans seem cosmically appointed to travel, poised “at the intersection of the timeless with time” as the poet T. S. Eliot depicts it.

In the quiet, brown time of the year, these fall Triduum days are an invitation to do the profound inner work: to face our shadows and deep fears, to know in ourselves that which already lies beyond death, to drink at its fountain, then to move back into our lives again, both humbled and steadied by that which lies beyond both light and dark, beyond both life and death.

One way we may more readily accomplish the deep dive into this soulful place is by remembering a gift, one sometimes lost in the middle of our busy lives. It is gratitude, an essential ingredient ... *continued on p. 8*

Take a Moment to Make a Pledge

by Julianne Stafford and the Finance Committee

If you have been in the sanctuary or following Sunday services online during October, you've had a chance to learn through the weekly Stewardship Moments a little more about some of the folks with whom you worship.

Nancy O., Brenda, and Julianne joined with Fiume, Mira, and Pastor Burke to share their experiences of giving their own resources to support our church community, and their delight in an encouraging Randy Newman song, "He Gives Us All His Love."

These church members shared what makes giving to FUMCPA a meaningful event for them, and how they have planned their giving. They have shared about participating in worship, fellowship groups, community outreach programs, and other FUMCPA gatherings that inspire and connect them through the years.

Nov. 2 is Consecration Sunday, when we ask for God's blessings on the pledges of giving for the coming year. If you haven't had the chance to return your estimate of giving for next year, please take a moment to complete and return that card to church. This makes possible the planning for the coming year. Pledge cards may also be found at the Welcome Desk in the narthex.



Blessings to you and thank you always for being a vital part of this faith community. ❖

Help Deck the Halls for the Holidays

by Pam Cutkosky

It soon will be time to **Deck the Halls** at church in preparation for celebrating Advent and Christmas. Help decorate the sanctuary for the Christmas season on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, Nov. 29, from 9 a.m. to noon.

We have garlands to string, wreaths to hang, trees to set up by the altar table, and decorations for the narthex. When the congregation arrives for worship the next day—which will be the first Sunday of Advent—they will be amazed at the transformation!

Please let Worship Chair Linda Grossman, Pam Cutkosky, or Mira Dabrowski know if you can help on Nov. 29. ❖



All Saints Day

Our church will mark All Saints Day with special worship

Nov. 9. The Chancel Choir will present five anthems to honor saints from our church and saints we have known in our lives who have made a difference.

Please bring pictures of the departed loved ones in your lives to display on tables in the sanctuary and light a candle in their memory.

We will ring bells and read the names of the saints of our church who have left us in the past year.

By remembering these everyday saints, we honor the soulful world beyond our sight and ken, where all who live will travel after they pass on, where we ourselves will journey one day. ❖

Fellowship and Fun



Koinonia meets Saturday, Nov. 8, at 7 p.m. in Kohlstedt Hall at the church

for **Jigsaw Puzzle Mania**.

Work alone, or with a team for more challenging puzzles. Take some puzzles home at the end of the evening.

Cookies and punch will be provided. RSVP to Curt and Carol Gleason: curtglea@pacbell.net or 650-494-2340 (leave message).

Koinonia is a FUMCPA fellowship group that welcomes couples or singles of all ages. ❖

November Worship Schedule

This month we offer our estimates of giving on Consecration Sunday, honor our Saints, reflect on the dysfunction in the world, give Thanks for our blessings, and welcome Advent into our hearts. Please join us in worship!

Nov. 2	21st Sunday after Pentecost Consecration Sunday and Communion Sermon: We give and we receive. Scripture: Sirach 35:1-13 (CEB)
Nov. 9	All Saints Sunday 22nd Sunday after Pentecost Sermon: All our saints Scripture: Ephesians 3:14-21
Nov. 16	23rd Sunday after Pentecost Sermon: Finding balance in a broken society Scripture: Romans 8:18-28
Nov. 23	Christ the King Sunday Sermon: Thanksgiving for Christ's goodness Scripture: Psalm 100
Nov. 30	1st Sunday of Advent Sermon: Mary; Theotokos, Mother of God Scripture: Luke 1:26-55

This year, Advent arrives the last Sunday in November, giving us more time to celebrate this sacred season.



Mary, baby Jesus and angels over door to Salisbury Cathedral (L); Coronation of the Virgin, Bernardo Daddi, 1340 (R)

December Worship Schedule

This Advent season, we will uncover the meaning of Advent through its characters and story. Mary, Joseph, the ox and lamb, shepherds, and Jesus too. What do they mean and why do we remember them so well after all these years? We'll explore this primal story and its people to see them more clearly and understand them better.

Come walk the Advent path in preparation for the birth of God in our lives.

Dec. 7	2nd Sunday of Advent Sermon: Joseph; Father of God Scripture: Matthew 1:18-24
Dec. 14	3rd Sunday of Advent Sermon: Angels, animals, shepherds and innkeepers Scripture: Luke 2:1-5
Dec. 21	4th Sunday of Advent Sermon: God is at the heart of the Nativity Scripture: Micah 5:2-4
Dec. 24	Christmas Eve Homily: Silent Night, Holy Night Scripture: Luke 2:6-20
Dec. 28	1st Sunday after Christmas Sermon: God and the Innocents Scripture: Matthew 2:13-23



Stock Up for the Holidays with UWF Cards

United Women of Faith (UWF) will sell beautiful handmade cards for Christmas, Thanksgiving, birthdays—and all occasions—on the patio after worship on these Sundays:

Nov. 16 Nov. 23 Nov. 30 Dec. 7

Ruthie Waters designs the cards and leads a small team of decorators who handcraft each card.

Cards are priced from \$5-\$8. Choose cards that you yourself would like to send or select a set of cards to give as a gift to someone on your Christmas list. Cash or check only.

Come out and support this UWF fundraising effort! All proceeds go to UWF missions. ❖





A Family Ministries gang of 24 FUMCPA members and friends attended the Stanford-San Jose State football game Sept. 27 to watch Stanford win by one point in a down-to-the-wire thriller. The Lam family from Hong Kong, visiting Japanese professor Nao Kohtake from Japan, Rev. Karen Paulsen's friends Linda and Tom, and a young friend of the King family, joined FUMCPA members for an evening of fun and fellowship—and cheering! ❖



My Stars

When I see my stars again
My face will light up and grin
Feel Heaven for the first time
Eyes dazzled by the sparkling sky
Tears pour down my cheeks
A newborn life begins
"I miss you! I miss you!"
Good to have you at night.
Hold both hands with heaven above
Shout throughout the darkness
"I need you! I need you!"
I want you tonight
May I hide in your fragrance
A passing chance
Streaking meteor at last
Leaves me feeling awe in awe.

Polaris is a steady rock
You hardly move a muscle
Eyes gaze without straining
What have you seen over the ages
Human time is a twinkle in your eye
"I want more time! I want more time!"
I leave this night
And want it to last forever.

Eyes gasp on Orion's nebula
Hercules stars in M13
Ring Nebula in Lyra's harp
Holds a secret tone with its part
There's no special place
No one fills
"Saturn's rings! Saturn's rings!"
I pray I see them still."

—by FUMCPA member Randy Senn

Dear Readers,

This November issue is my last as editor of Insights. After 13 years as volunteer editor of the mostly-monthly newsletter, I have resigned and plan to devote time to other pursuits.

Thank you to the many people who have submitted articles and photos over the years—special thanks to the contributors who write for the newsletter every month.

Thank you also to everyone who faithfully reads Insights. I hope it has helped you stay informed and feel connected to your church community, and will continue to do so under new management.

Please direct future inquiries and submissions to insightsfirstpaloalto@gmail.com.

—Michele W. Conway



by Nancy Olson

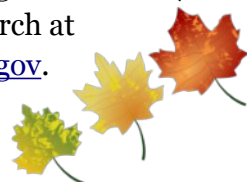
Happy Thanksgiving to everyone! Even in this world shaken by war and threats of war and political unrest and forecasts of storms and floods and fires (oh my!), we still have much to be grateful for.

The tree leaves are beginning to change colors for the upcoming beautiful technicolor display. I do love it, and am truly grateful for the Palo Alto weekly street sweepers. Street sweeping helps keep our roads and paths clear, reduces flooding, and keeps litter out of our creeks and bay.

We need to do our part, too. Park cars off the street on your designated weekly sweep day. Place your leaves and yard trimmings in the green compost cart instead of in the street. (*It is illegal to place leaves in the street.*) Rake leaves off storm drain grates during rains to prevent flooding. Remember those leaves are valuable additions to your home compost.

If you live in Palo Alto, find your street sweeping schedule at | [this link](#) or search at www.paloalto.gov.

Oh, and remember to compost food scraps and bones after those yummy Thanksgiving meals you have shared with family and friends. ❖



CONCERT NOTES

Saturday, Nov. 8 at 5:00 p.m.

Young Artists Foundation presents
a Student Chamber Music Recital
Information at www.yafmusic.org/

Thursday, Nov. 13 at 7:30 p.m.

San Francisco Early Music Society presents **Stile Antico** performing “Prince of Music, Palestrina in the Eternal City”

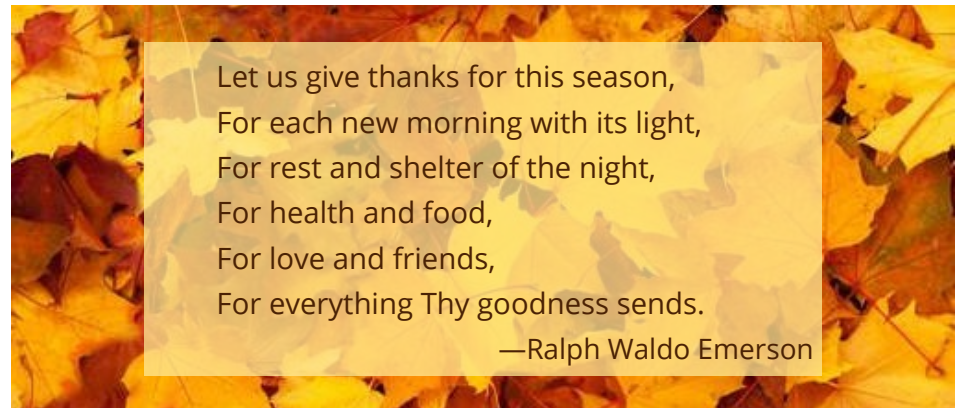
In this one-night-only special event, GRAMMY-nominated British vocal ensemble Stile Antico delves into the sublime harmony of the high Renaissance by marking the 500th birth anniversary of Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina—the undisputed master of the style which gives the group its name. Palestrina’s stellar career was inextricably entwined with the papacy and the great churches of Rome for which he composed. This program explores the sumptuous music Palestrina would have sung at the Sistine Chapel, changes in his compositional style demanded by the Counter-Reformation, his tragic personal life, and his influence on his successors. This exquisite repertoire includes several of Palestrina’s most beloved and timeless motets, gems by other leading composers active in Rome, and a new work by leading British composer Cheryl Frances-Hoad, written especially for this program.

Ticket available at www.sfems.org/stile-antico

Saturday, Nov. 15 7:30 p.m.

A-Sharp Chorus presents “The Wonderful World”

Information available at asharpchorus.org/2025/10/08/a-sharp-chorus-2025-winter-concert-program/ ❖



Pastor's Corner, from p. 2

if we hope to connect deeply with the spirit and establish a meaningful life. Gratitude serves as a doorway, one that allows us to bypass much of the clutter and debris that gets in the way of real change. For gratitude is acknowledging what we already have with thanks and recognizing what we receive in appreciation. When we are focused on the day to day, on the important but not essential, we can easily miss the constant flow of gifts that come our way. But when we stop and listen, then we may notice all that happens which we cannot really account for. The life we lead, the unique opportunities that arise, the blessings often easy to overlook—all are miracles when we consider them.

November is the last full month of Fall, but also the month of Thanksgiving, a time to stop and give thanks for all we have. One thing to be grateful for is our ego, the structure within us that keeps us focused on ourselves, our goals, our needs. The ego is part of life, a necessary part, especially as we grow up and learn to support and care for ourselves. Ego reminds us to stay focused, to get the job done, to learn and improve our abilities. But at some point, we need to put the ego aside, to control it and not allow it to be the boss of us. For the ego, by definition, cannot focus on anything but itself, sees no value in anything else but itself. The ego wears blinders, and if it is not the center of conversation, it won't listen. So, we must train ourselves to keep the ego under control, train it to pipe down and follow direction, not the other way around.

As the ego leads to selfishness, so an open heart and mind lead to selflessness, to understanding and to gratitude. We cannot help but feel freer and more empathetic when we open our mind and heart to life's challenges. When this openness occurs, we may find that life flows more easily, we find less constrictions, for an ease and gentleness influences how we engage with life. This takes place in our relationships also. For example, a friend tells us about their current troubles in life. The ego would choose to simply pay lip service to the friend, mumble a few words of comfort, before bringing the discussion back to itself. But the open heart and mind will more likely sit with the friend, bringing its inherent patience and care as a gift to them, and so listen with compassion and empathy.

The ego is like an awesome app on our phone or some brilliant software for our computer. It is a tool, not a teacher or leader; the ego cannot, with rare exception, recognize gratitude. Only our open hearts and minds can recognize gratitude, honor our thankfulness, and feel appreciation. The gifts of gratitude are many and varied, but we must practice recognizing gratitude in our lives if we are to value, learn and grow from it.

This holiday season, especially for Thanksgiving, try recognizing gratitude in yourself and practice looking for it in others too. Notice it in your children, in your partner, in your friends, and in the world around you. If you do not see it often enough, then bring it to others through your own practice. Practice gratitude by being gratitude, recognize it in others by seeing it in yourself first. Thankfulness for what we have and gratitude for all that comes our way, this is the way to bring God and Christ into our world.

Blessings for a joyous and thankful holiday this month, *Pastor Burke*

UWF CONNECTIONS

by Nancy Olson

Is everyone as amazed as I am that it is November already?!

Daylight Savings Time ends Nov. 2. That alone always throws me (and my cat) out of sync for at least a week.

Then an important election Nov. 4. Well, every election is important. Our vote is our voice!

We recognize our veterans on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. Remember to say, "Thank You for your service," to any veterans you meet.

And of course, there is the day we set aside to say "Thank You" for our many blessings on Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 27! Happy Thanksgiving!

I do hope we are always, every day, thanking God for the grace showered on us. Also take the opportunity to say "Thank You" to family members, friends, and neighbors for adding much to our individual lives. Because we have so much, it is easy to become complacent, to take things and people for granted.



Here is a December date to put on your calendar: Thursday, Dec. 4!

We have started planning for our annual Cookie Plate distribution. It is a FUMCPA traditional holiday touch much appreciated by our homebound members.

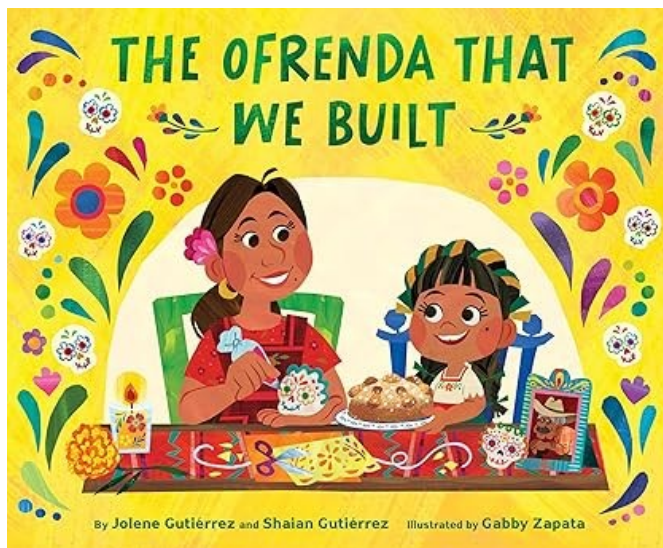
UWF members and all women of the church are invited to bring three dozen cookies to the Patio Room on Dec. 4. If you can plan to stay for about an hour to help assemble the plates, that will be appreciated. It is a fun time! Pam Cutkosky will be coordinating elves to deliver our completed plates.

There will be reminders, but please put the date on your calendar now. ♦

Happy November, First Palo Alto Readers!

by Char Cutkosky

November 1-2 is Día de los Muertos/Day of the Dead. We have a new children's book, *The Ofrenda That We Built*, by mother-daughter author team Jolene and Shaian Gutiérrez and illustrated by Gabby Zapata. The book serves as an introduction to the holiday, and is inspired by the nursery rhyme "The House That Jack Built."



The *ofrenda* is the home altar that serves as the center of Día de los Muertos celebrations and remembrances. Families welcome the spirits and memories of deceased loved ones with beautiful displays of food, flowers, and remembrance tokens, such as photos and cherished mementos.

The Ofrenda That We Built follows a three-generation family as they decorate together with handmade crafts and candles, honoring the spirit of their grandfather.

The library team hopes you'll take a look!



DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

FUMCPA Hosted Spooky Fun for Church and Community

by Pamela Cutkosky and Pastor Burke

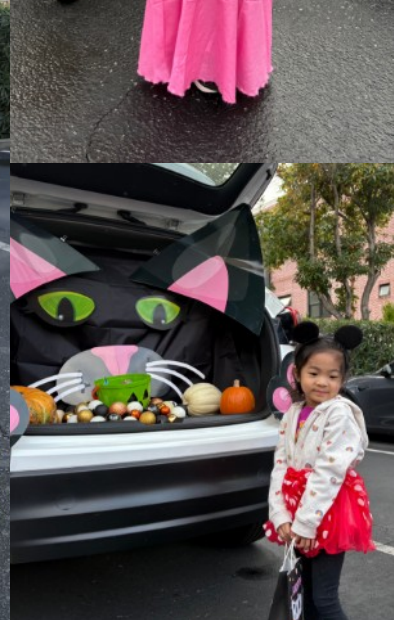
About 80 kids and another 40-50 adults came out for Trunk or Treat, Sunday, Oct. 26, in the church parking lot. That was a pretty good turnout considering it rained on us! It was so nice to see our church and local community coming together.

Thank you to those who decorated their cars and passed out candy: Mira Dabrowski, the King family, the Bellardos, Susan Stephens, Mike McCartney, Rick Allen, Linda Grossman, Pam and Char Cutkosky, Julianne Stafford and Alan Cooper.

Thank you to childcare attendants Juana and Irene who supervised the pumpkin painting and to Pam Cutkosky and Louisa King who supervised the cookie decorating. A big thank-you to Pastor G for setting up the event!

About 75 people were on hand for the scary tales and organ concert after Trunk or Treat. Thanks to Pastor Burke and organist Diane Keller for a haunting evening!

Photos by Linda Grossman, Lou Bellardo, Patty Bellardo, Susan Stephens, Burke Owens





Many thanks to all who attended the Virtual Pilgrimage program Friday, Oct. 24, when Pastor Burke shared photos such as those below and stories of his experiences abroad during his renewal leave. Below left: Statue of John Wesley in the garden of Methodist Church, Epworth, England. Below right: Carsaig Boathouse located on the Isle of Mull in Scotland. Photos by Burke Owens





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

- 2 Consecration Sunday (Bring estimates of giving.)
Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 4 Staff Parish Relations, 7 p.m. (Zoom)
Election Day. Be sure to VOTE! (offsite)
- 8 Koinonia Jigsaw Puzzle Mania, 7 p.m.
- 9 All Saints Day (Bring photos of departed loved ones.)
- 10 Last day to suggest organizations for Joy of Giving (See p. 1.)
- 11 Veterans Day
Peaceful Presence, 7 p.m.
Trustees, 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)
- 16 UWF Gift Cards Sale, after worship
- 18 Finance, 7:30 p.m. (Zoom)
- 20 Deadline for next issue of Insights
- 23 UWF Gift Cards Sale, after worship
Multifaith Worship in honor of Thanksgiving,
4 p.m. in the chapel, led by Pastor Burke
- 27 Thanksgiving Day
- 29 Deck the Halls, 9 a.m.
- 30 First Sunday of Advent
UWF Gift Cards Sale, after worship

Early December dates to note

- 3 Fall Church Conference, 5 p.m.
- 4 UWF Cookie Plates, 10 a.m.

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 Thursday 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)
- 6:00 p.m. Covenant Class (Zoom)

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

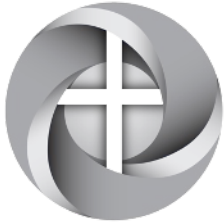
- 7:00 p.m. Upstream Contemporary Worship (Zoom)

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 Nov. 20.

Photos of church events are accepted at any time. Include photographer's name, date of the photo, and a brief description. Everything is subject to editing. Please email submissions to insightsfirstpaloalto@gmail.com or bring them to the church office. Thank you!



FIRST PALO ALTO
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Palo Alto, CA 94301-2016
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PALO ALTO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Next INSIGHTS deadline: Nov. 20

