



JULY 2026

July Worship

July continues the sermon series on the book of Exodus as Moses works to fulfill God's call: to bring the Israelites out of Egypt and lead them to the Promised land of Canaan in the north. Moses, Aaron and Pharaoh battle with one another, the prophets for God's will and the king for his own pride as supreme ruler of his people. 3,000 years later, in these present times when the world's powers continue to raise Cain, I see Moses and his people as good companions for us. For we, like the Israelites eons ago, still walk the road of faith, of hope and of justice, listening for God's call and guidance in the midst of the noise and clamor of the world around us. Please join me for what promises to be a wild ride!

July 5 - 6th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: Plagues of Frogs, Gnats and Flies
Scripture: Exodus 8: 1-15

July 12 - 7th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: Plagues of Pestilence, Hail, Locusts and Darkness
Scripture: Exodus 10:3-20

(cont. next page)

Pastor Burke's Corner

Dear friends,

Guess what? It has been three years since I arrived in Palo Alto! This amazing, incredible, at times challenging but always miraculous season with First Palo Alto United Methodist Church continues to transform my life. Looking back over the last 36 months and thinking about all we've experienced as a community I see that our time together has gone well. In this community, I have learned much, prayed, witnessed, taken part and connected deeply with this precious place and its people. I thank you and vow to continue to serve and create new places for God to live and take root in our lives and this location.



Rev. Burke at the Musee Cluny, Paris

July 19 - 8th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: Final Plague and First Passover

Scripture: Exodus 12: 1-8, 12-15

July 12 - 9th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: Crossing the Red Sea to Freedom

Scripture: Exodus 14:10-31

Through and with God's grace all this is possible. Thank you for welcoming us into this community.

We have good and important work to do together over these next years. In time we will see great and new things planted and even blossoming here in our faith community.

It is a great joy and I pray that Caroline and I will be part of First Palo Alto for many years to come.

May God continue to bless and keep you always,

Pastor Burke



"Kind hearts are the gardens;
kind thoughts are the roots;
kind words are the flowers;
kind deeds are the fruits."
- English Proverb



**One-Day Vacation Bible School (VBS)
Saturday July 11, 10 AM - 4 PM**

We're thrilled to invite all kids ages 5-11 to our one-day Vacation Bible School! This year's theme is "Snowball Mountain Challenge: Find Your Strength in God". Lunch and snacks will be provided. Be sure to invite friends and neighbors!

Sign-up form: <https://tinyurl.com/fumcpavbs26>

Questions? Contact Pastor G.



A Prayer for Our Church

"May all who stop within my gate
Find solace here; exchange the hate
For love that ever-widening dwells
Outside the circle of themselves.
And may I have the listening ear
That helps dispel all doubt and fear.
In days of dark uncertainty,
Lord, place an inner light in me.
Lord, should my inner light be low,
Help Thy unfailing grace to grow,
That all who come to me with care
May see Thy love reflected there."

PICNICS IN THE PARK

Our annual Picnics in the Park will be Thursdays July 16, 23 and 30, starting at 6 p.m. in Mitchell Park in Palo Alto.

Everyone is welcome – bring your neighbors, friends and visiting relatives. Dogs too. A suggested donation is \$7 for adults and \$4 for children.

We start with grace at 6:10, followed by a buffet line. We have the entire East Meadow group area reserved. It's wonderfully shaded and also next to two playground areas. Parking is plentiful at Fairmeadow Elementary or along East Meadow Drive (both close) or in the main Mitchell Park parking lot.

We are lining up grill chefs, salad makers and dessert bakers to provide a delicious picnic dinner each week. If you can provide food, contact Coordinator Pamela Cutkosky.

Time: 6 p.m.

Dates: Thurs July 16, 23, 30

Place: East Meadow Group Area in Mitchell Park, along Meadow Drive near Fairmeadow Elementary School in Palo Alto

Suggested donation: \$7 for adults, \$4 for children

Last month six 5th graders graduated from TRU School, with tears and cheers, in a ceremony held in Kohlstedt Hall. So good to see children learn and grow right here on our campus!

Major Gifts by Lou Bellardo

From time to time, the church receives major gifts, usually from the estate of members who have passed away. These gifts are processed differently from the “normal” annual Estimate of Giving (EoG) and Non-Estimated Giving (give). Last year, the church was notified that we were a beneficiary of the Individual Retirement Account (IRA) of long-time member Pam McKee, who passed away on September 12, 2025. On February 2, 2026, FUMCPA received a distribution in the amount of \$84,137 from Pam's IRA. We have received notification that both FUMCPA and the Centennial Endowment Fund (CEF) will receive distributions from Pam's Living Trust within the next several months. The distributions for FUMCPA will be added to the Pam McKee Bequest Fund that is administratively coordinated by the Board of Trustees and tracked on Page 4 of the FUMCPA monthly financials.

The church is very grateful to Pam and others who have included FUMCPA or the CEF as beneficiaries. If you would like information relative to including either the CEF or FUMCPA in planning your estate or trust, please contact Jill Kispert or Lou Bellardo.

If you would like to receive a copy of the most recent FUMCPA financials, as approved by Finance, please contact Lou Bellardo.



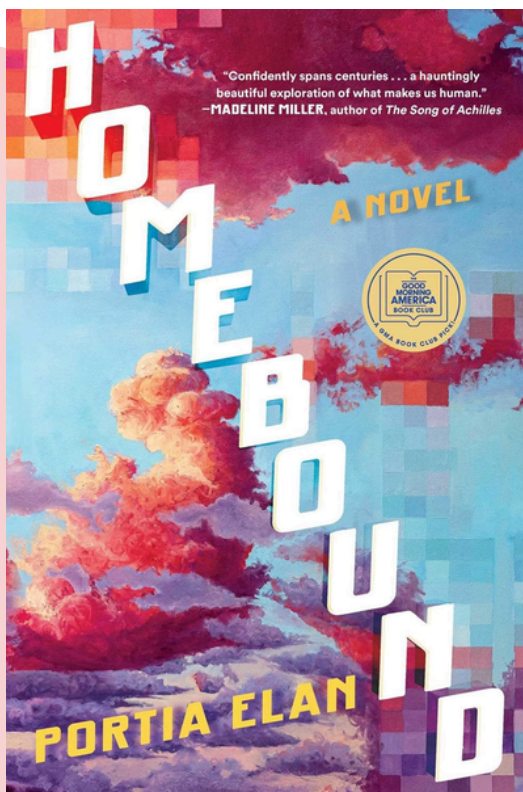
Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley

by Reverend Norman Obenshine



Steve Wood and Rev. Norman Obenshain at a RTSV job site in San Jose

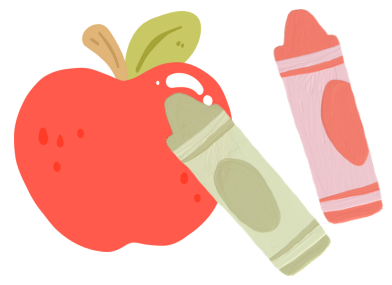
It has been said that Christ is the Head of the Church but we are the hands and feet. So, sometimes we are called to acts of service in Christ's name. On April 25 Steve Wood and I were part of a much larger team, including many young people from churches in the Oakland area, that painted a home and garage for an older couple in San Jose. Usually we are also joined by Mike McCartney. This team was part of a program called Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley (RTSV). This program began in Texas in the 1970s and became known as "Christmas in April" reaching across the U.S. A group of leaders, including many women from the local carpenter's union, founded a chapter in South Bay in 1991. This morphed into RTSV in 2000 and continued to grow. Now RTSV does home repairs, painting, etc. on a Saturday in October and one in April each year, plus many other on-going services focusing on housing. Simple home repairs and painting reduce stress, lower healthcare costs, improve economic stability, reduce falls, help folks age in place, stabilize generational wealth, protect affordable housing, reduce the risk of homelessness, strengthen neighborhoods, foster connection and preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our region. In this way we reflect the love of God for all people. Watch for information about the next Saturday event this fall.



Hello, First Palo Alto Readers!

by Char Cutkosky, Library Committee

Discover a new book by local Oakland author Portia Elan! Elan grew up in Palo Alto where her parents taught at Stanford University, and was baptized at First Palo Alto. Her debut novel *Homebound*, which was selected as a "Good Morning America Book Club" pick, is part historical fiction, part sci-fi. The plot begins with Becks, a teenager from the '80s, trying to honor her deceased uncle by finishing the video game he had begun creating. A copy of the game long outlives Becks and her uncle, falling into the hands of first an AI researcher in 2078, then a post-apocalyptic salvager in 2586.



August 29 – Family Ministries hosts a day of **Stanford Football!** It’s Cardinal Kids Day as the Stanford Cardinals open their season against the Rainbow Warriors of the University of Hawaii. Gametime is 4 p.m. See Pastor G or Pam Cutkosky if you are interested.

September 6 – Rally Day! This year our kickoff for the fall program year happens the Sunday BEFORE Labor Day. This is earlier than usual – but Labor Day is later than usual! Sunday School resumes for children, and church ministries will show off their plans for the year as we all enjoy lunch on the patio.

Green Notes

by Nancy Olson

Our beautiful bright sunny mornings give me great joy and remind me of wonderful childhood memories of play in the sprinklers on the lawn. Oh how we took that water for granted.

Now at my advanced age I truly appreciate the wonder of water as God’s great gift. Now there is a greater population and greater demand for water beyond human need for personal health and growing food. Machines are ever more “thirsty” for water and polluting the water they don’t use.

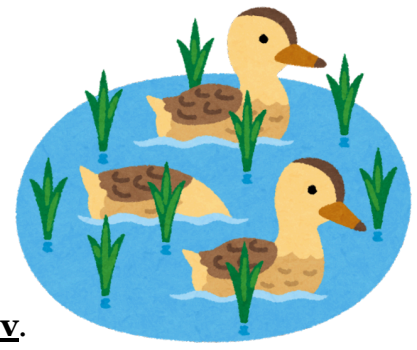
So let us be thankful for the magic of water from our household taps and for irrigation of our plants. Let us be mindful of all the demands for a share of that wonderful gift, by conserving and by not polluting the water we use.

This is especially important to remember as we enter Pool Season. If you are draining a pool or spa or fountain, protect our environment from pool chemicals such as copper and chlorine. Only drain to your sanitary sewer cleanup - NEVER in the street, gutter or storm drain!

Look for your sewer cleanup (usually labeled with an “S”) usually found in a landscaped area of your front yard. Use a garden hose to drain into the cleanup. Clean pool cartridge filters in a landscaped area, again NEVER in the street or gutter. Avoid sewer overflows: don’t drain on rainy days and keep a slow flow rate.

Remember that drained water through the sewer cleanup flows to the treatment plant before being discharged to our Bay. Water off the street and gutters flows directly to local creeks and to the Bay without treatment.

If you need help locating your sewer cleanup, contact City of Palo Alto Utilities at 650-329-2161 or UtilitiesCustomerService@PaloAlto.gov.



Annual Conference

L: Pastor David Yang w/ wife Pastor Youngmi (right), Pastor David's mentor, Pastor Burke, and fellow Pastor Laurie Bayen after ACS ordination ceremony

R: Pastor Burke and reps Rick & Diane Allen at Annual Conference



CEF Grants: MOVE and VIDAS

by Diane Allen

For the 2026 grant cycle of our Centennial Endowment Funds (CEF), our church (FUMCPA) voted to give \$10,000 each to two agencies devoted to addressing critical needs in our communities.

MOVE Mountain View targets the persistent problem of safe parking for vehicle-dwellers, a significant subset of our many neighbors who lack stable housing. We received a thank you letter for “our generous cash contribution of \$10,000.” The letter included the following:

“Your support directly enables our Safe Parking Program, which provides secure overnight parking for individuals and families living in their vehicle in Mountain View and Palo Alto. In addition to a safe place to park, participants receive individualized case management, housing navigation assistance, and connections to essential services such as showers, laundry, and community resources. This contribution strengthens our ability to provide stability, dignity, and meaningful pathways toward permanent housing for our neighbors experiencing housing instability.”

Thank you, FUMCPA, for your support of MOVE Mountain View through this CEF grant!

VIDAS (Vital Immigrant Defense Advocacy and Services) provides legal representation and training for immigrants, including those who are threatened with removal, requesting asylum, in the process of naturalization, or brought to the US as children.

Their response to our cash contribution included the following:

“It was an absolute boost to my spirits ...to learn of First Palo Alto United Methodist Church’s donation to VIDAS! We are continually humbled by the generosity and solidarity of our faith community in these times. Together, we will create the future of our dreams – one where everyone can build a life and thrive, no matter where their journey began.... We are excited about all that is made possible through your generosity and this special connection.”

Their thank you letter said, “We at Vidas are deeply grateful for this gift, which allows us to provide pro bono legal services to migrants and refugees through our team led by 10 immigration attorneys. Your generosity will also help us build up the next generation of advocates, broadening the movement for universal representation, safe passage, and a humane migration system for all.”

Thank you, FUMCPA, for your support of VIDAS through this CEF grant!

by Nancy Olson

Honoring the Legacy of Hotel de Zink

For over three decades, more than twelve different congregations, taking turns during the year, hosted Hotel de Zink. June was our month at First United Methodist Church.

The Program eventually came under the direction of LifeMoves. Homeless men and women were assigned case managers to connect them to community resources, and to navigate housing and employment systems.

Each evening in June clients were fed a hot dinner and provided a safe place to sleep in Kohlstedt Hall. On the first night in June the women of our congregation provided a Welcome Bag full of small personal items such as a toothbrush, paste, mouth wash, floss, soap, shampoo, conditioner, comb, notebook and pen, socks, a granola bar, and a candy bar. The bags were delivered in person with a personal welcome to each of the 16 to 20 clients. Everyone was invited to worship with us each Sunday morning.

Families in our church signed up to provide hot dinners. Our families were invited to remain and socialize with our guests; many did. We also provided breakfast foods and supplies for bag lunches for clients to take with them each day.

Then our church installed a shower room in the lower level, so we provided a hot shower, soap, shampoo and conditioner, and towels. This was a very popular addition to our welcome.

Our women's group took this responsibility very seriously and did an excellent job--"mission" under our very own roof.

This program rotating among diverse congregations came to a formal end this March. The individuals served by Hotel de Zink have not been left behind. They have moved into the recently opened bridging community and will move into the brand new Homekey Palo Alto community — city-backed interim housing that supports clients who seek to stay in the community where they have roots.



turn the page for more pictures from the Summer Solstice Gathering!

Summer Solstice



Thanks to all who took part in last month's Summer Solstice Gathering. A wonderful evening with 50 in attendance. Looking forward to the Fall Equinox salon in September!

(left) Rich Lacampagne, Mira Dabrowski, Diane Keller, Alan Cooper, Rev. Burke Owens, Julianne Stafford



(above) Summer Solstice treats, including "Cheesehenge"

Visit from Bishop Sandra Olewine



It was a real joy to welcome Bishop Sandra K. Olewine to worship on Sunday June 7th to preach and bless the sacraments for communion. Making it extra special was sharing the worship with First Tongan and Pastor Loni, and Wesley UMC and St. Andrews UMC with Pastor Tevita and wife Christina. We hope to have all four churches return for worship in August!



Palo Alto PRIDE

We had a wonderful time at Palo Alto's first Pride Festival! Many local churches, synagogues, and organizations showed up to cheer on performers and greet the community. It was a joy to answer questions about what it means to be a Reconciling Congregation and all the ways our church supports the LGBTQ+ community.



Clockwise from top: Reverend Burke and Kristy Larson staff the First Church booth, Folclórico Colibrí performs in front of City Hall, organizations tabling along Hamilton



July

- 3 Church Office Closed for Fourth of July
- 7 Staff Parish Relations Committee, 7 PM (Zoom)
- 11 Vacation Bible School, 10 AM - 4 PM
- 14 Board of Trustees, 7 PM (Zoom)
- 16 1st Picnic in the Park, 6 PM
- 20 Insights Deadline
- 21 Finance Committee, 7 PM
- 23 2nd Picnic in the Park, 6 PM
- 30 Last Picnic in the Park, 6 PM

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

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

Sunday

- 10:45 AM Worship, in person and livestreamed. Check firstpaloalto.com or Thursday e-news for the link.
- 11:45 AM Snack-n-Chat
- 12:15 PM Couples Group (1st & 3rd Sundays)
- 12:15 PM Bible Study (2nd & 4th Sundays)
- 6:00 PM Covenant Class

Monday

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

Tuesday

- noon Current Affairs Fellowship (Zoom)

Wednesday

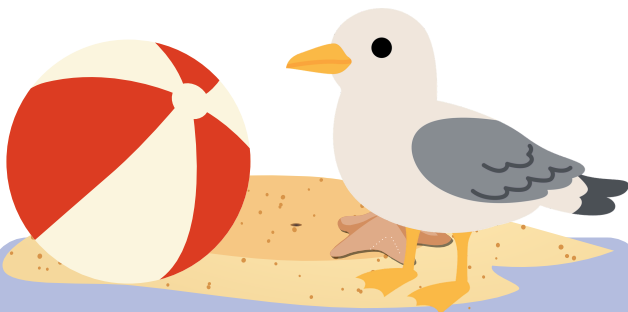
- 7:00 PM Upstream Contemporary Worship (Zoom)

Thursday

- 1:30 PM Call to Prayer
- 6:00 PM Picnics in the Park (July 16, 23, 30)

Friday

- 7:00 PM Spanish Bible Study (2nd & 4th Sundays)



Information for the next issue of the Insights newsletter is due July 20. For photos, 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!

DONATE



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!



FIRST UNITED METHODIST
CHURCH OF PALO ALTO

First Palo Alto United Methodist Church
625 Hamilton Avenue Palo Alto, CA 94301-2016
www.FirstPaloAlto.com | @firstpaloalto

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PALO ALTO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Inside this issue of **INSIGHTS**
JULY 2026

Picnics in the Park (p. 3)
CEF Grants: MOVE & VIDAS (p. 6)
Photos: Summer Solstice
Gathering, visit from the Bishop,
Palo Alto Pride (p. 8-10)

Next INSIGHTS deadline:
July 20

