



SEPTEMBER 2026

DAVID WORTHINGTON

Global Ambassador of
Methodist Heritage Sites

SEPTEMBER 6, 7 PM
IN THE SANCTUARY

“Early Methodism & John Wesley”



David Worthington, Global Ambassador of Methodist Heritage Sites of the General Commission on Archives & History, will be presenting an overview of early Methodism and the

lives of John and Charles Wesley.

A gifted academic and speaker, Worthington will share his in-depth knowledge of 18th century England, the American colonies and the contributions of the Wesley brothers to the first Great Awakening.

Worthington, a former director of the New Room in Bristol, is responsible for preserving and promoting the significance of Methodist Heritage sites in the US, the UK and worldwide. He works to raise awareness of the significance of the Methodist story in order to advance the mission of the UMC and highlight the important role GCAH plays in “helping us understand the past to envision the future.”

Pastor Burke's Corner

A quarter of a century ago this month, a national disaster unlike any struck our country and its people.

Early on the day of September 11, 2001, four groups of militant Muslim terrorists, after months of planning, captured four commercial airliners enroute to the United States from Europe.

The group, al-Qaeda, then commanded the four planes to fly to their chosen targets: the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., the World Trade Center Towers in NYC, and the U.S. Capital in D.C.

The World Trade Center Towers were both destroyed and the Pentagon damaged. Meanwhile, the passengers and crew on the fourth plane caused it to crash in Pennsylvania before they could get to D.C.

A terrible day, with nearly 3,000 people killed and many thousands more, wounded in body, mind and soul. Al-Qaeda's mission on 9/11 was to destroy confidence in the Western world. They viewed the United States efforts to secularize the Middle East and the disregard of its religious beliefs and practices as undermining the society and culture of Muslim countries. They saw that the U.S. and its allies valued the resources of the Middle East, such as oil, over its people and would continue to promote policies that advanced the West's energy and economic needs, without concern or consideration for the countries involved, comparable to previous U.S. policies and practices in Central America and in Asia.

Al-Qaeda, and other extreme traditionalist Islamist groups such as the Taliban, Isis, etc., view the modern, technology-driven society and economy that the West promotes as being counter to their, i.e., God's instructions and teachings to humanity. (cont. p. 2)



September Worship

The metaphor of the vine has been used for thousands of years to reference the development and maturation of a person or a community. This month, along with sermons on the annual season of harvest and crush, two guest preachers will speak, one about the heart's desire, and the other on sacrifice and parables.

*The time is surely coming, says the Lord,
when the one who plows shall overtake the
one who reaps, and the treader of grapes
the one who sows the seed;
the mountains shall drip sweet wine,
and all the hills shall flow with it.*
Amos 9:13

September 6 - Rally Day

Sermon: Harvest and Grape Crush

Scripture: Luke 12:1-7

September 13 - 16th Sunday After Pentecost

Guest Preacher: Rick Allen

Sermon: Transactional or
Non-Transactional?

Scripture: Psalm 51:16-17,
Luke 13:34

September 20 - 17th Sunday After Pentecost

Guest Preacher: Bill Davidson

Sermon: Our Hearts' Desire

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13

September 27 - 18th Sunday After Pentecost

Sermon: The Winegrower and
Fermentation

Scripture: Amos 9:11-15

A generation plus on, the world we know in 2026 is undoubtedly less religious, less concerned with timeless traditions, less aware even of living a Godly moral life than in past generations. Rather, the modern world we know is about consuming, making money, buying the newest goods from one's favorite brands, with the assumption that the upgrades in our lives will be brought about by technology, and continued economic development. This major shift in our human world, accelerating as the years go by, is troubling for many, not just extremists, as we transition from a society where faith, justice and love enable a world valued as part of God's kingdom, to one that is consumer driven to the detriment of the broader community, for it believes foremost in the miracle of technology with buying as the key to happiness.

Today, people around the globe are separated from one another not only by religion but by culture, values, traditions, gender, ethnicity and of course, the economy and its too often unreal market-based approach to what is valuable, in one another and on our planet. The terrible news from Afghanistan, and from our own political discord and from humanity's continued lack of success in addressing the planet's deterioration are further evidence that much is unresolved. For we have people on all sides of the issues, some with the desire to go back to the good old days, like religious fundamentalists (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist), or political conservatives (the back-to-our-core values folks in the U.S. but also in China, India, Russia and Europe and Asia, too) or corporate/business traditionalists who see the earth as a resource to be tamed and used for economic power and gain. Then there are those who see extreme change as necessary, no matter the cost--religious progressives, political super progressives, economic dissenters and environmental prophets. Both sides have serious deficits to their approach, yet each have something to offer if we could only relearn how to speak with and listen to one another.

Despite how things look, I still believe that as a species we have more work to do, more justice to achieve and greater compassion to realize. How? By understanding our shared needs, goals and values instead of getting so caught up in what is different, or by ignoring what we share. (cont p. 3)

Let us revel and enjoy our shared visions, for they are so much greater than our divisive ones. As we remember the pain and loss of 25 years ago, may we look to see more clearly the challenges we still face.

We can no longer retreat into past blinkered attitudes, believing that our actions as a nation will benefit everyone. Our country is undeniably powerful, creative, and resilient, yet too often we consider other nations, other cultures or other people's needs less important than our own.

So let us attempt to do better, to consider other points of view, other needs, and perspectives when decisions are made that affect many. When our nation is considering changes in political or economic policy or strategy, when our religious leaders are looking at what is right for the future and the world we are growing into, when world leaders look at how to safeguard the planet for future generations and needs, let us consider the many results and impacts of these many possible choices. Humanity has the power to choose what is right and what is not. Let us learn to reflect and choose wisely, for our lives, and our earth, and that of our descendants depend on it.

Pastor Burke



9/11 Memorial and Museum, N.Y., N.Y.

World Communion Sunday is October 4, with a bread and soup lunch after the worship service! Contact Pam Cutkosky if you can bring or serve soup.



The Lord created humanity at the beginning,
and he left them to the power
of their choices.

15 If you choose to,
you will keep the commandments,
and keep faith out of goodwill.
16 He has put fire and water before you;
you can stretch out your hand
for whichever you choose.
17 Life and death are in front
of human beings;
and they will be granted
whichever they please.

-Sirach 15: 14-17

Friends,

I will be away from Monday
September 11-Sunday the 20th,
returning to the office on
Monday the 21st.

My time away will be split into a
period of retreat and then a visit
with my brother and sister on
Block Island in Rhode Island.
While I am gone, Rick Allen will
preach on the 13th and Bill
Davidson on the 20th.

Many thanks to them and I
know you will enjoy and be
inspired by their words and spirit.
Look forward to being back with
you all after a time of renewal
and family.

Blessings,

-Pastor Burke



Website Redesign Updates

In late June, the Communications Committee engaged James Lau of Small Actions Studio to redesign our church website. James was recommended to us by Bet Hannon, who built our current website nine years ago and has been maintaining it for us ever since.

Bet had alerted us that some elements of our current website were no longer supported with updates and patches, so if they were hacked or got a glitch, they would simply stop working. The website redesign project took on more urgency, and the committee is grateful to have two CEF grants to pursue a complete redesign.

First, James met over Zoom with some committee members to familiarize himself with our church. Then, he researched companies that provide different elements of websites – everything is a plug-in these days – and made recommendations for us.

At this point, he has built the basic architecture of the website and has begun building specific pages, based on the wish list and priorities provided by the Communications Committee. Char Cutkosky is working on a new website-friendly logo that references our sanctuary and stained glass. Committee members are writing new text as needed.

We are looking at a late October/early November launch. Our new website should provide a better “user experience,” as they say, especially for newcomers.

Questions? Ask Communications Chair Pamela Cutkosky.

Rally Day Kick-Off

SUNDAY 9.6

LEARN MORE ABOUT...

Sunday School for ages 3-11

Bible Study, English & Spanish

Discussion Groups: books, movies, current events

Ways to volunteer

What's new with...

Social Action Team, Church Library, Care Team, United Women in Faith



Letter from Pastor G

Dear church family,

I want to personally share with you an important decision about the next chapter of my ministry. After much reflection, prayer, and dialogue, I have informed Pastor Burke and the appropriate church leaders that I will conclude my ministry as Director of Children, Youth, and Families at First Palo Alto in early June 2027.

I share this now because I believe healthy transitions take time. There are still several months until June, and there is much ministry left for us to do together. Sunday School will continue, the Children's Moment will continue, our community events and Bible study will continue, and I will continue to serve this congregation with the same commitment and pastoral care I have sought to offer throughout my time here.

This congregation has become much more than a workplace for me. You have welcomed me as a pastor, entrusted me with your children and families, invited me into important moments of your lives, and allowed me to serve alongside you. The children who call me "Pastor G," the families I have come to know, the volunteers who have served alongside me, and the relationships we have built over the years have become an important part of my journey.

My gratitude is also deeply personal when it comes to my family. You have not only welcomed and loved me; you have embraced my family as part of this community. You have welcomed Ana with warmth, recognizing and valuing her identity and calling as a pastor and chaplain. You have watched our son David grow over the past five years, surrounding him with love and making him feel part of this family of faith. As a husband and father, that means more to me than any ministerial responsibility. Ana, David, and I will carry with us the affection, friendships, and experiences we have shared with this congregation.

For all these reasons, as we approach this transition, what I feel most deeply is gratitude. I am grateful for what we have shared, for what we have learned together, and for all the ways God has allowed us to walk and serve side by side.

Later, the time will come for more extensive farewells and deeper reflection on the significance of these years. This is not yet that farewell. We have many months of ministry ahead of us, and I look forward to sharing them with you.

My desire for the coming year is to continue serving faithfully while helping prepare the ministry for a healthy transition. I ask for your prayers: for me and my family, for Pastor Burke and the church leadership, for our children and families, and especially for what God is preparing for this congregation in its next chapter.

Thank you for your trust, your affection, and the privilege of serving among you.

With gratitude and hope,

Pastor Dr. Gerardo García Palacios
"Pastor G"

UWF Connections

by Nancy Olson

The September focus for us individually: What is Faithfulness to You? How do you live out your faithfulness in a changing world?

Our church lives have been changing for years. We have been facing declining membership and attendance. After the global pandemic, our culture shifted even more and many norms that may have been taken for granted may feel less “normal” for many now. Virtual church provided extra accessibility for some, while for others the drain of the screen time made it feel more isolating. As we’ve navigated how to be a church community in new and responsive ways, our expectations for one another and traditions may differ as people live out their faith from many different stages and walks of life.

As we live out our faith, how can we continue to practice relationships and build community in the spirit of openness and inclusivity? How can our inclusivity be about creating a community that incorporates the needs and particularity of all that choose to come, and doesn’t ask the minority to unfairly accommodate the needs of the majority?

So how do we live out our faithfulness in a changing world?

In 1739, John Wesley helped form Methodist societies and crafted what has since become known as the “Three Simple Rules” which Bishop Rueben Job helped bring to this generation:

1. Do No Harm
2. Do Good
3. Attend upon the Ordination of God / Stay in Love with God.

Author Dottie Yunker expounds that Wesley’s examples about doing no harm aren’t only about avoiding harming others or ourselves, they are also about not participating in systems that harm others.

* * * * *

The United Women in Faith organization is trying to adapt to the changing challenges in our country and countries around the world - concentrating on the needs of women and families - there are many challenges and many needs.

I am proud to be a part of this group and support the many worthwhile projects they/we are trying to accomplish! The calendar year is passing so quickly, if you have not yet made your contribution to UWF, there is still time and need. Send or give our treasurer Lucy Tompkin your check, please.



Podcasts are coming! to First Church as Pastor Burke and Scott Thomas initiate a new way of keeping our church connected. Sporadically, but soon consistently, podcasts including recordings of scripture, reflections and interviews will be posted to the church YouTube page and in the future, the church website. Look for upcoming eblasts with more information!

Green Notes

by Nancy Olson

Californians love our coasts. Not only are they sources of joy and recreation, but they are home to incredible wildlife, like curious sea otters, ancient leatherback sea turtles, majestic humpback whales and playful harbor seals.

Yet beneath the surface, things aren't going too well. In fact, the future of life in our oceans is increasingly at risk.

Marine ecosystems are in trouble. Nearly 90% of the world's large fish, such as sharks and tuna, are gone.

In the last decade, California's underwater kelp forest was decimated following a marine heat wave, and we now have only a fraction of healthy kelp forest habitat left. We are seeing record numbers of marine mammals washing up on shores - from sea lions to grey whales.

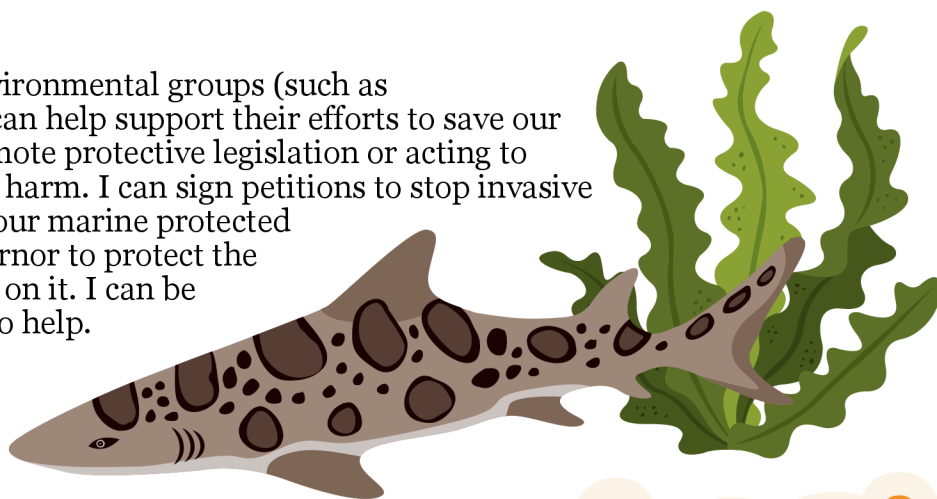
Too often, marine life can't find healthy, protected ecosystems where they can recover and thrive.

One of the best ways to protect our oceans and marine wildlife is to create, expand and strengthen marine protected areas. These designated areas are like state parks in the sea.

While some fishing interests have resisted expanding marine protected areas, far more Californians support protecting our oceans. Divers, surfers, coastal communities and scientists understand how much healthy ecosystems benefit everyone, and a strong majority of residents agree.

Well, what can I do?

There are several ocean focused environmental groups (such as **EnvironmentCalifornia.org**) I can help support their efforts to save our oceans when they are acting to promote protective legislation or acting to reject acts that will cause long-term harm. I can sign petitions to stop invasive federal actions to mine and drill in our marine protected areas. I can call or write to our governor to protect the ocean and the wildlife that depends on it. I can be aware of new possibilities of ways to help. Won't you help too?



Save the Dates!

Save the date for our annual Halloween events! This year **Trunk-n-Treat** will be on Saturday October 24, and the **Spooky Organ Concert** will be on Friday October 30.



WALK TO END ALZHEIMER'S

by Robert Lasater

August not only means Back to School, but the beginning of the yearly efforts by the Alzheimer's Organization to raise funds. Alzheimer's disease is a leading cause of dementia. Each year the Alzheimer's Organization hosts a Walk to End Alzheimer's, an opportunity to both raise funds for research into what causes it, with the goal of finding a cure, and also provide help and support for those diagnosed with the disease and the people who care for them.

This year, FUMCPA has formed a team, and we invite you to get involved. Over the last 10 years, Alzheimer's has stricken multiple members of the FUMCPA congregation, so without question, it should be a priority.

You can either join the team and help our fundraising efforts by asking your friends and family to donate, or just make a contribution yourself. Either can be done from our team's home page.

More can be found by clicking [here](#), which leads to our team's home page.



Saturday October 24

2027 Stewardship Campaign

This year's stewardship campaign begins on the last Sunday in September and continues through the first Sunday in November. We all celebrate God's abundance in our life, and as a church we are asked to prayerfully consider our plans for stewardship of those gifts. Please consider how you can share your abundance and amplify Christ's love in our church and the community.

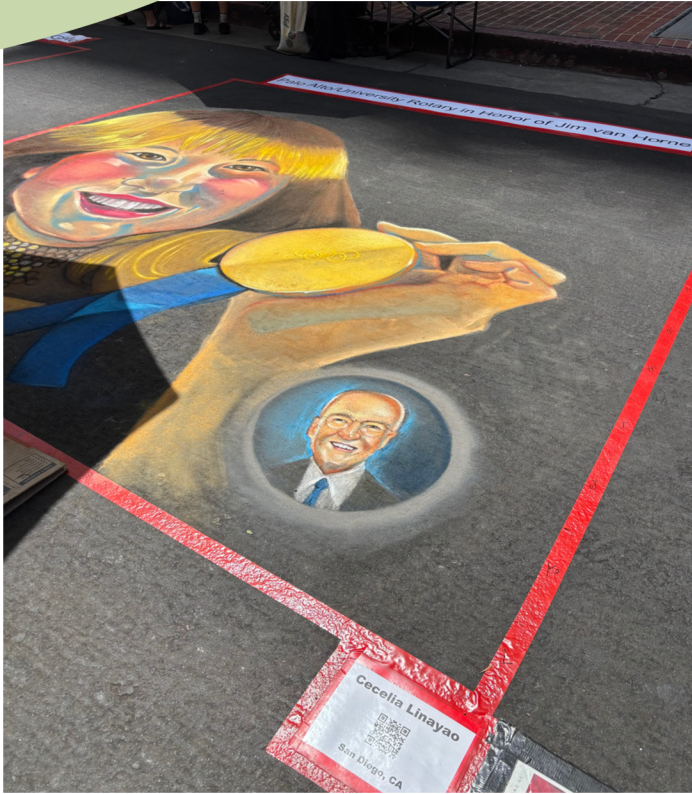
Antarctic Exploration & Autumnal Music Salon

September 25, 7 pm

A unique opportunity to discover a long-gone time when explorers in three masted ships and later steam and motorized vessels traveled into the unknown looking for the south poles. Hear music of the day, with poems and readings to discover one of the last great unknown territories on the planet, in celebration of the 65th anniversary of the Antarctic Treaty.



August Photos



(left) The Rotary Club sponsored a chalk artist at the PA Arts Festival in honor of Jim Van Horne. The artist included a small portrait of Jim in her chalk painting of Olympic gold medalist Alyssa Liu.



(above) Katherine Parker presented Pastor Burke with a framed artwork from Nepal for the church after her presentation August 30 about her work there empowering women and communities. FUMCPA supports Katherine's missionary work through the Social Action Committee.



(left) Vigils in SF continue with a small group headed monthly to the Federal Immigration Courts on Sansome Street in downtown San Francisco. There we offer prayers, song, coffee, juice, snacks and guidance in support of those waiting in line for interviews and court dates. Many thanks to Pastor Norman, Azi Mohklessi and Nancy Glaser for their faithful participation.



Letter from Gregory Gondwe

Dear Patty and Lou,

It has been a while since we last spoke, and we miss you so much. As this festive season came around, it simply could not pass without us checking on you and sending our love across the miles.

Looking back, we truly believe that 2025 was a great blessing for our family, largely because it gave us the opportunity to meet and share life with such kind, generous, and loving people as you. Our time at Stanford will always remain close to our hearts. As we look ahead, we wish you a prosperous, healthy, and bountiful 2026, filled with peace, joy, and continued purpose.

We have been doing well and are settling back into life in Malawi. I have transitioned smoothly into my work and am now fully grounded in running the Platform for Investigative Journalism (PIJ).

Edith is also back at work and doing exceptionally well.

Vikhu continues to amaze us—she is thriving academically, scoring A+ in all her subjects, and enjoying herself immensely.

Vichi settled back in so effortlessly, almost as if she had never left.

Our son Vinandi, whom we did not travel with to the U.S., has been accepted into the National ICT College and will be starting this month, which makes us very proud.

The girls have been on their festive break and will be returning to school this Monday.

Please extend our heartfelt regards to Pastor Burke and the entire congregation. Kindly let them know that they should never stop praying for us, just as we continue to keep you and the church in our prayers from this corner of the globe.

Once again, thank you for holding us so warmly in your hearts.

We send you our love and best wishes. With affection and gratitude,

Gregory, Edith, Vichi, Vikhu, and Vinandi Gondwe

Blantyre, Malawi

New Small Group: *Art & Spirituality*

A new small group was initiated in July and is meeting bi-weekly in the education building. The purpose of the small group is to engage with the spirit through the doorway of art, whether graphic, sculptural, literary, audio, textural or ritual. Just as spirit can lead to art, so art can lead to spirit. If you are interested, please contact Pastor Burke.



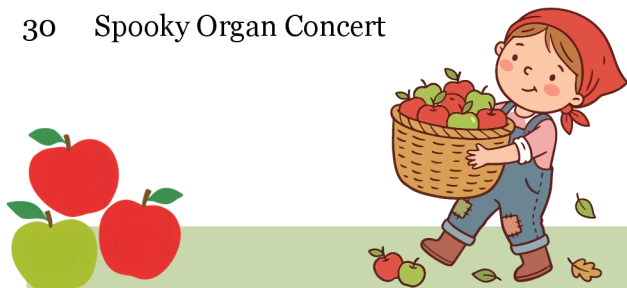


September

- 1 Staff Parish Relations Committee, 7 PM (Zoom)
- 6 Rally Day
David Worthington Lecture, 7 PM
- 8 Board of Trustees, 7 PM (Zoom)
- 10 Multifaith Voices Peace Picnic & Prayers, 5 PM
- 15 Finance Committee, 7:30 PM (Zoom)
- 20 Insights Deadline
- 25 Autumnal Antarctic Salon, 7 PM

Coming Up In October

- 4 World Communion Sunday
- 24 Trunk-n-Treat
- 30 Spooky Organ Concert



Information for the next issue of the Insights newsletter is due September 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!

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.

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

Friday

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



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www.FirstPaloAlto.com | @firstpaloalto

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

FIRST PALO ALTO UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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Next INSIGHTS deadline:
September 20

