



# THE FPC JOURNEY

Walking in Freedom,  
Wholeness, and  
Intimacy



May 2025

[www.ReachingTheValley.org](http://www.ReachingTheValley.org)

# Welcome

## to: The FPC Journey



Stay Connected with First Presbyterian Church of Santa Clara - Your Church Family in Santa Clara, CA- with The FPC Journey

Join us as we share the latest news, events, and inspirational updates in our newsletter. Our newsletter is your go-to source for staying connected with our vibrant community, spiritual growth opportunities, and upcoming programs. Whether you're a long-time member or visiting for the first time, our newsletter aims to keep you informed about everything happening in our church and our local Santa Clara community.

Each month, we will strive to offer insightful devotionals/articles, upcoming event details, volunteer opportunities, and ways to get involved with the church. Stay up to date with our weekly services, youth programs, mission projects, and much more. Be part of the First Presbyterian family and grow in faith, fellowship, and service.

Visit our website at [www.reachingthevalley.org](http://www.reachingthevalley.org) for more details.





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## Work Hard Play Hard

By: Sui Lim

That seems to be the motto of our friends Tim and Teresa. Year-round, they work hard to help keep our church running smoothly, often doing many things in the background that we don't even know about. So when they go out to play, they play hard too!

And what better way to play hard than to climb Mount Everest! Well, it turns out that they didn't climb that actual mountain, but they did see it from a helicopter while traveling through Nepal and Bhutan. Talk about going to the ends of the earth and the roof of the world!

I always enjoy hearing about their adventures, especially since they are on the lookout for God's fingerprints. I asked them about how they experienced God in special ways during their trip.

1) God's timing: Tim and Teresa arrived in Bhutan just as the country was starting a month of eating only vegetarian food - which was amazing since both of them are vegetarians!





# Work Hard Play Hard (cont)

2. God's protection: Bus rides on extremely narrow mountain roads and airplane landings on extremely short runways tested their nerves, but God watched over them. They climbed the heights to reach Tiger's Nest in Bhutan and made it down safely!

3. God's handiwork: They saw beautiful sunrises in far-off lands, creatures great and small, and the mighty Himalayan mountains, capped by Mount Everest:

4. God's love: They encountered kind people all along their trip - guides, pilots, citizens of Nepal and Bhutan. They were especially touched by an invitation to dinner by one of their guides at his home with his wife! The love of God is truly expressed in the interactions between people with gestures of kindness like these.

After 2+ weeks of experiencing the wider world, Tim and Teresa were happy to be back home (and we're happy that they're safely back)!



# Many Paths, One Faith: Embracing Unique Journeys with Christ

By Amy Gunaseelan

No matter your age, background, or experience, everyone walks a unique path to God. And that's exactly how it's meant to be.

For some Christians, it can feel intimidating to see others who seem further along in their faith. But scripture and experience remind us: no two journeys with Christ are the same. Each one is personal, purposeful, and precious in God's eyes.

According to the Pew Research Center, "In recent years, 33% of the world's babies were born to Christians." Many are raised in the faith from birth—like Marlene Arellano, FPC's Director of Worship—while others find God later in life, sometimes after winding and difficult paths. Each story, though different, points to the same grace.

Arellano recalls her early commitment to Christ with clarity and conviction.

**"I became a Christian, I remember vividly, at the age of five... One day, the pastor was preaching about salvation, and at my mere five years old, I knew I was the sinner, and I knew I wanted to give God my life... I surrendered my life to Jesus that day."**



Chrystopher Sahgal's journey looks very different, yet is no less powerful. He remembers his first encounter with God as a child—his baptism as a Catholic.

**"It's my earliest childhood memory. I have no idea why I can remember my infant baptism, but it was confirmed by my mom because there's no photos of it."**

Sahgal acknowledges that community plays a key role in building a relationship with God—something he once lacked.

**"I look back and think, if I had had a better relationship [with God]... and had that guidance, you know, that you get in community, there's a lot of decisions I wouldn't have made."**

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## Many Paths...(cont)

God made Himself known to Sahgal at a critical point in his life.

**"I felt more alone than I ever had, and so I just prayed... I heard God's audible voice, and He said, 'Come home.' I knew He wasn't talking about moving back to LA or anything like that. He was talking about [FPC]."**

That turning point began to transform his life. **"I started coming [to FPC], and little by little, that feeling of loneliness-of being lost-was gone."**

For sophomore Savion Thomas, baptism became a meaningful milestone in his spiritual journey. **"I wanted to be more one with God and have my sins forgiven,"** Thomas said, explaining what led him to take the step of baptism.

Arellano, too, emphasizes the power of consistent involvement in the church community. **"I've always had a very strong conviction and a very strong faith in God because I was involved in church,"** she shares.

Each of these stories highlights an essential truth: faith is not a competition. As Galatians reminds us, we are not called to compare, but to grow.

Whether you've walked with Jesus since childhood or are just beginning to seek Him now, your journey is valid, valuable, and vitally connected to the Body of Christ. Keep walking, keep seeking, and know that you are never alone.



**"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."**  
— Galatians 3:28



# Street Life Ministries: Where Faith Meets the Street

By: Chrys Sahgal



At First Presbyterian Church, our commitment to serving others has long extended beyond our own walls—and one of the ways we've lived that out is through a meaningful, ongoing partnership with Street Life Ministries. This connection began through the faithful work of Flora Lyons, who helped establish the relationship between our Sew & Sews ministry and the team at Street Life. Today, that partnership continues on with Chrys Sahgal, Karen Grether, Betty Yatagi, and Kathy Pedone. This small, but mighty group packs bags every two weeks.

Together, and in close collaboration with Pastor Scott Dixon of First Christian Church of Palo Alto, we've supported Street Life's mission to bring hope, healing, and the love of Christ to those experiencing homelessness and addiction across the Peninsula.

## Who They Are

Street Life Ministries believes in the transformative power of the Gospel, and in the ability of community to change lives. While not affiliated with a specific denomination, the organization's foundation is deeply biblical and theologically rich.

They hold to the essentials of historic Christianity:

- Belief in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
- The Bible as the inspired Word of God and final authority for Christian life and faith
- The saving work of Jesus Christ through His death and resurrection
- The empowerment of believers through the Holy Spirit to fulfill their unique, God-given purpose
- The Church as the living Body of Christ, called to love, grow, and serve

## Street Life Ministries (cont)

As members of various local congregations, those involved in Street Life strive to live out these beliefs with a focus on service. They are dedicated to what the Church does best: proclaiming Scripture, cultivating healing, encouraging citizenship, and building loving, Christ-centered relationships.

### What They Do

Street Life Ministries serves meals six times a week at multiple locations, offering more than food—they offer fellowship. Each gathering is centered around:

- Teaching of the Word
- Breaking of bread
- Community prayer
- Meaningful relationships

In addition to meals, they provide essential life resources like clothing, hygiene items, and transportation assistance. But their ultimate goal is wholeness—physical, emotional, and spiritual—for every individual they encounter.

### A Life Transformed: Anthony's Story

One of the most powerful testaments to the mission of Street Life Ministries is the story of Anthony, a Philadelphia native whose life was once marked by addiction, incarceration, and hopelessness.

After years of bouncing between treatment centers in Florida and California, Anthony found himself in Orange County at another dead end. It was there he met a girl whose father worked with Street Life Ministries. The father reached out repeatedly, encouraging Anthony to get help. Eventually, Anthony agreed to travel with him to the Bay Area.

That decision changed everything.

Upon arriving, Anthony was introduced to David Sheeran of Street Life Ministries. David didn't just offer encouragement—he offered a hotel room, helped Anthony connect to AA meetings, and introduced him to a church and a circle of supportive Christian men.

Through that network and the strength of community, Anthony fully embraced the 12 steps of recovery for the first time. With a sponsor, accountability, and faith, he has now achieved over two years of sobriety, the longest in his life.

**"David didn't just give me a room—he gave me a new start," Anthony shared. "The men I met through Street Life became my mentors, my brothers. I wouldn't be here without them."**





## Street Life Ministries (cont)

Today, Anthony works as a case manager at Life Moves, helping others struggling with addiction find the same hope he discovered.

**"I know what it's like to feel lost," he says. "Now I get to be someone else's David."**

### **The Heart of the Ministry**

At its core, Street Life Ministries exists to share God's love in tangible ways—one meal, one prayer, one person at a time. Through consistent outreach, deep spiritual commitment, and a community of believers, this ministry is shining Christ's light in the darkest corners of our neighborhoods.

Whether through a warm plate of food or a relationship that restores dignity and purpose, Street Life Ministries reminds us all that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. To learn more, you can visit [www.streetlifeministries.org](http://www.streetlifeministries.org), and if you are interested in joining or helping the group here at FPC please speak with Chrys Sahgal





# More Than a Trip: Living Love and Faith in San Bartolo

By Chrys Sahgal, Teresa Wiegman, and James Watts

When I close my eyes and think of community, I can't help but picture the bright faces and open arms of our brothers and sisters in San Bartolo, Mexico. What started for me and Sandra as an unconventional honeymoon in 2018 has become a sacred rhythm of returning—this year will mark my fourth trip. Each visit draws us deeper into a shared life of love, faith, and mutual service. The hospitality we're shown by the San Bartolo community, and especially our host families, is simply inspiring.

From the moment we land in Mexico City, we are met by a familiar face, whether that is Juan Carlos, who used to lead the church, or Rene (now a part of the church's leadership team, which consists of Luci, Rene, Rodrigo, Israel, and Crisel). Their warm welcome transforms what could be an overwhelming arrival into something deeply comforting. Whether we travel to San Bartolo in a shuttle bus or a car, the feeling is the same: we are going home.



We settle in with host families who now feel like relatives. My hosts—Rodrigo, Naelle, and Amanda—have become a second family. I've watched Amanda grow from a shy five-year-old with a pit bull puppy named Canelo to a confident pre-teen (with a much bigger dog). After years apart due to COVID, Canelo still remembered me—tail wagging and leaping with joy—and Amanda calling me “uncle” moved me in ways I can't explain.

**“Love is shared in many ways, and in San Bartolo, it's often through food.” - Chrys Sahgal**



## More Than a Trip: (cont)

Each day, after digging gardens, building fences, re-roofing outdoor bathrooms, or planting seeds, we're nourished not only by incredible meals but by the spirit of togetherness around the table. Lunch in Mexico is the heartiest meal, and after a long day of service, it's a true gift to sit down as one family in Christ. I particularly look forward to Naelle's home-cooked meals when we get home at night.

Of course, our days aren't all work. One day is set aside for rest and exploration—pyramids, churches, and local markets. But perhaps the most joyful evening of all is at a small local Italian restaurant, where Lucy and other church members perform live music. Last year, Lucy invited Larry Frame to join her on stage to sing a requested song—and he did! It was a moment of laughter, surprise, and beautiful harmony that none of us will forget.

**"Our car rides were a special, silly time. Our church meetings were heartfelt."-Teresa Wiegman**

Teresa's favorite memory is a perfect snapshot of the trip's joy and depth. But beneath the fun lies hard, holy work. She remembers weeding gardens, sealing rooftops, and most importantly, witnessing real transformation—like Wendy's father, who came to Christ and is now stewarding a large garden that feeds many.



These small miracles are echoed in Jim's reflections on hesed (lovingkindness) and emeth (faithfulness), Hebrew words that capture the spirit of what we are called to bring—and receive—in San Bartolo.

**"In San Bartolo, we were given the chance to show Hesed and Emeth to kids that really need God's blessings in their lives."- Jim Watts**



Jim shared stories of Wendy and Emiliano, children who spent their days with the mission team because their parents worked long hours. Angel, a boy with developmental challenges, lit up with joy when someone gave him his first pair of leather shoes. And there were Dan and his two brothers, teenagers who, despite the lure of cartel money, chose the path of faith and fellowship through the church.



## More Than a Trip: (cont)

These are the people and stories that keep pulling us back. Not out of pity, but because we see God at work in their lives, and we are invited to join in. As Pastor Dennis often reminds us, church is not just a Sunday thing, and in San Bartolo, we live that truth.

Worship is not confined to pews. It flows through shared meals, laughter, scripture study, and acts of service. Some years, we gather for nightly devotions. Other times, we're invited to preach or pray with the local church. Every time we leave, we change—we become more aware of God's presence, more committed to His work, and more alive in our faith.

This year's trip will take place July 18–28. If you've ever felt a nudge to go deeper, to stretch your faith, or simply to love more widely, pray about joining us.

It's more than a trip. It's an invitation to live out God's hesed and emeth in a community that welcomes you as one of their own.

For more information, speak with Jim Watts. We'd love for you to be part of what God is doing next.





# Call for Submissions: Share Your Stories with Us!

We'd love to hear from you! The FPC Journey is now accepting story submissions from members of our congregation. This is a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the lives, actions, and experiences of the people around us. However, please note that submissions should focus on stories about others — not about yourself. Think of it as an opportunity to highlight the good deeds, inspiring moments, and heartfelt connections that make our church community so special.

Please submit your stories to Chrys Sahgal : [sahgalchrys@gmail.com](mailto:sahgalchrys@gmail.com) . We can't wait to read your contributions and continue celebrating the amazing people in our congregation!

While we truly appreciate every submission, please understand that not all stories may be included in the newsletter due to space limitations. If your story isn't featured, please know it's not a reflection of its value — we simply strive to include a diverse range of voices and experiences in each issue. Thank you for your understanding and continued contributions!



# MAY UPCOMING EVENTS

## HERE AT FPC

### Memorial Day Weekend (May 23-26)

- Many of us will be heading to Zephyr Point in Lake Tahoe for a small retreat where the theme will be “A Walk with God”. It will be filled with fun, laughter, and fellowship.



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