



THE FPC JOURNEY

Walking in Freedom,
Wholeness, and
Intimacy



July 2025

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 for more details.



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**FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA
CLARA**

OR



FIRSTPRESBYTERIANOFSAntACLARA

Freedom

By: Robert C. Fitch

You think I give,
you freedom,
to do whatever,
you want.
You think Freedom's
for your benefit,
given only,
to serve you.

I give you freedom,
so you can come,
come freely,
to Me.
Submit to Me.
Surrender all.
Give me your best,
not just your weakness.

I call you to service,
in your freedom.
Come freely,
to Me.
Serve Me voluntarily,
in your freedom.
Use My gifts,
for My purpose.



Ten Years Sober: A Story of True Freedom

By: Chrys Sahgal

This year marks ten years of sobriety. I don't share this lightly or proudly, but with a heart full of gratitude, reflection, and honesty. Because while staying sober for a decade is no small thing, what matters more is how I've stayed sober, and what I've discovered along the way.

The truth is, I didn't find freedom through sheer willpower. I found it by surrendering — not giving up, but giving over — my life to God.

The Early Years: A Daily Fight

The early days of sobriety were a battlefield. Every day was a fight against temptation, against old habits, against the voices in my head telling me I couldn't do it. I felt isolated and exhausted. I was trying to conquer addiction through my strength, and I had been here before and failed, so why would this time be any different?

The turning point didn't come when I tried harder. It came when my faith stopped being a concept and started becoming a relationship. And during the course of this relationship, I have learned what Dennis, so eloquently said a few weeks ago, that "There's a difference between fighting temptation and being delivered."

A New Life in Christ

As I leaned into this relationship with God — not religion, but relationship — something began to shift. The more time I spent with the Lord, and (I can't stress this enough!) with His people, the less I had to manage my behavior. My desires started to change. Healing began to replace striving.

I used to think submission was weakness. But I've learned that submission — real, wholehearted surrender — is the only path to true strength. The paradox of the gospel became real in my life: that in dying to myself, I found life. In letting go, I gained freedom.

Not Just Gaining, But Losing

People often ask, "What have you gained by following Christ?" And I often daydream of being asked this question. And when doing so, I imagine myself answering, but from a different perspective. I see it more in terms of what I have lost or been set free of: I lost addiction. I lost my rage. I lost the chains that had wrapped around my body, my mind, and my soul.

Ten Years Sober: A Story of True Freedom (Cont)

Addiction isn't just a metaphorical slavery. It's real — physically, mentally, and spiritually. It owned me. But Christ didn't just help me cope with it. He broke its hold.

Surrender isn't the end. For me, it was the beginning.

We All Need Freedom

Now, I want to be clear: this story isn't just for those recovering from addiction. Because addiction isn't the only kind of bondage. We're all enslaved by something — the need for approval, fear of failure, toxic relationships, destructive habits, the list goes on and on.

But here's the hope: the same God who freed me can free you. Freedom, true Freedom, isn't reserved for the desperate or the rock-bottom stories. It's for anyone willing to surrender.

The Final Word: Trust, Not Trying

Today, I'm not just sober — I'm free. And that freedom didn't come because I tried harder. It came because I trusted deeper.

To anyone reading this who's struggling — whether with addiction, anxiety, or anything else that feels too heavy to carry — hear this: There is hope. Not in yourself, but in the One who created you, loves you, and is strong enough to carry you.



Bells

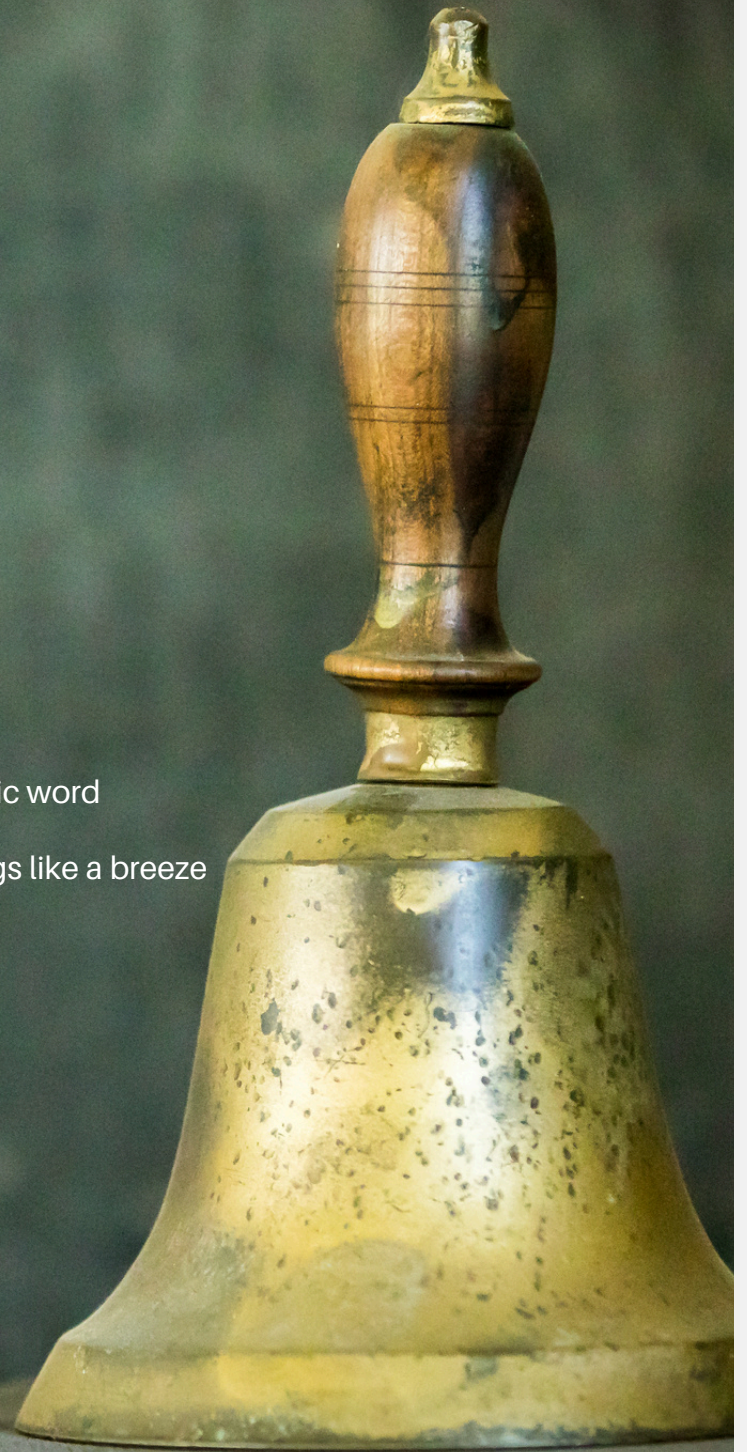
By: Karen Grether

Joy, Excitement, Purpose, Praise
Bold, Boisterous, alarming blaze
Ring in, ring out
The beginning or the end
Ring!

Ring in the transforming of new thought
Ring in the start of a brand new day
Ring out and the kicking off of old dead ways
Ring in maturing acts of compassion and grace
Ring in the healing of families' interface
Ring in the union of loving couples embrace

Ring in the joy of kindergarten cuddles
Ring in the victory of a job done well and won
Ring out hatred and ring in the peace
Ring in the healing that comes with release
Ring in the discernment needed to hear a prophetic word
Ring in the strength returning after illness blurred
Ring in the grace that God's extravagant love brings like a breeze
Ring!

Ring in the strength given to His people
Ring in His strategic plan
Ring in trust, abide, be well, love and repent
Ring in the reign of our King Jesus renown
Ring hallelujah ring!



“Freedom in Christ”

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free...” — Galatians 5:1

My Church,

At no time in the calendar of the Church is the theme of **freedom** more pertinent than in these days after Pentecost, when the Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, is poured out for the liberation of the soul from every bondage—be it sin, fear, or the tyranny of law misapplied or any form of legalism. The Apostle’s exhortation to the Galatians echoes with undiminished power: *“Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery”* (Gal. 5:1)

But what is this freedom of which St. Paul speaks? And how does it differ from the just plain freedom to do whatever you want, when you want? In Christian theology, **freedom in Christ** is not the autonomous will untethered from authority, but rather the **graced liberty to live as one ought**, not merely as one wills. It is the deliverance from sin’s dominion, not merely its penalty; and it is the joyous emancipation into service, not the state of independence so many seem to follow. Before we speak of Christian liberty, we really need to answer the question of what we are freed from. In Romans 6, St. Paul speaks with clarity: *“You were slaves to sin”* (v.17)

This is not poetic metaphor but theological diagnosis. The human condition, apart from grace, is not morally neutral, but enslaved, bound by disordered desires, futile thinking, and what Augustine termed the soul curved inward upon itself. This slavery is often masked by the illusion of freedom. The serpent in Eden offered Eve freedom from divine restriction, but the fruit brought death. **Thus, freedom apart from God is always a counterfeit**—a gilded cage for a soul no longer anchored to its Creator.

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Remember, it is about being free, whole, and intimate with God and the things that stop that. Christ does not merely free us **from** something; He frees us **for** something. The Exodus motif, which Paul draws upon in his epistles, reminds us that Israel was not delivered from Egypt to roam at will, but to become the covenant people of God. Similarly, Christ frees us from the law’s curse (Gal. 3:13), but not a life that beings out the authentic self. Rather, through union with Him and by the Spirit’s indwelling, we are enabled to fulfill the righteous requirement of the law (Rom. 8:4) from the inside out. Thus, Christian freedom is **relational**, rooted in adoption, not autonomy. It is the freedom of the child who no longer serves under fear of punishment, but lives in love and gratitude to the Father. *“You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear,”* Paul writes, *“but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons”* (Rom. 8:15).

It must be said that **freedom in Christ is never self-referential**. It is, in its mature expression, cruciform. As Paul says elsewhere, *"You were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another"* (Gal. 5:13).

This is a truth the Church must retrieve in every age. The freedom of the Christian is not the boast of the unaccountable, but the humility of the forgiven. It does not seek its own advantage, but the good of the Body. In an age that prizes rights over responsibilities, the gospel calls us to a paradoxical liberty: one in which we are freest when most surrendered to the good of our neighbor and especially within the Body of Christ.

The safeguard of Christian liberty is life in the Spirit. *"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom"* (2 Cor. 3:17). This is not merely a rhetorical fancy statement but an ontological reality. The Spirit empowers the believer to put to death the old nature and to walk in the newness of life. Christian freedom, then, is not a status to be claimed, but a walk to be cultivated. This is New Creation done once, but also progressively as we walk in obedience. Remember, obedience brings true transformation

Let me suggest, pastorally, that our freedom in Christ is most evident not in the volume of our declarations but in the quiet fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Against such things, Paul reminds us, there is no law. Remember the judgement seat, what have you done in the body, good or bad? It is your character and how we treat people, based on a regenerated heart.

So let us live, friends, as those who have been truly set free: free from guilt, yes—but also free from bitterness, from self-centered ambition, from fear of humanity, and from the need to prove ourselves before God or others. For if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36).

Let this liberty bear fruit in love, and let your love be the fragrance of Christ in a world still bound in chains it cannot see. The fact is, we are called to Love others, and Christ loves us. A high bar indeed, but we are learning, loving, and enjoying this great adventure together.

Yours in the service of the Liberating Christ,
Dennis

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 . 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!



JULY UPCOMING EVENTS

HERE AT FPC

- Family Movie Night – Wednesday, July 9th | 7:00 PM | Social Hall

Join us for a relaxed and fellowship-filled movie night. This is a great opportunity to connect with others in our church family across all ages. Don't miss out, and please see Karen if you have more questions!

- Mexico Mission Trip Offering – Sunday, July 13th

An offering for the Mexico Mission trip will be taken on Sunday, 7/13. The team will begin departing for Mexico on Saturday July 19th.



COMMUNITY AT LARGE

- Silicon Valley Campfire Worship: Wed, July 16, 2025
@ 7-9 pm (PT); Lakewood Park :834 Lakechime Drive Sunnyvale,
CA 94089

Please note that we will be meeting at Lakewood Park in Sunnyvale. You can find us at the firepit in Lakewood Park's interior near the picnic areas and the John W. Christian Greenbelt trail. Be prepared for cool weather in the evening by bringing a jacket and blanket or camp chairs to sit on. Please invite coworkers, friends, and interns to Campfire Workplace Worship Night!
We look forward to connecting with you!