



October 2025

www.ReachingTheValley.org

Welcome to: The FPC Journey

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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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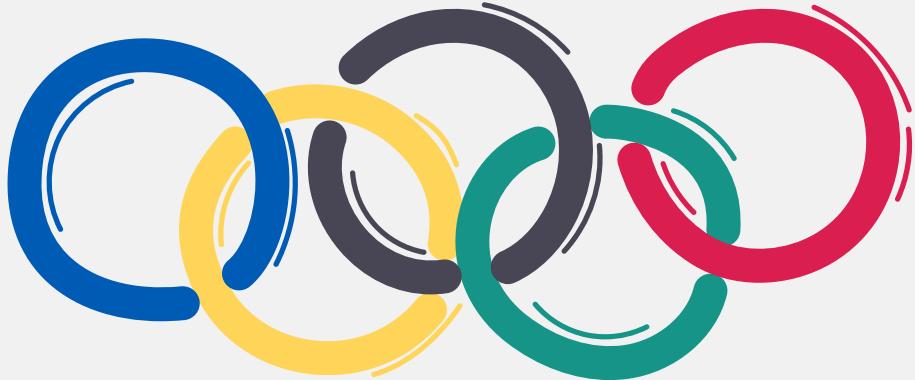
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF SANTA
CLARA

OR



"Unity in Excellence"

By: Sui Lim



Every four years, I look forward eagerly to the Summer Olympics. The soaring music, the complex back stories, the incredible feats of strength, speed, stamina, and grace - what a grand panorama! I feel that I'm watching the Olympics together with millions of people around the world, cheering on athletes of my country and other countries too. That sense of togetherness and unity is amazing.

I think God desires us to seek excellence in ourselves - He desires our highest good because His perfect love for us. Excellence is not arrogant - it is sterling character of integrity and humbleness. Each of us has sparks of excellence. When we recognize and honor the sparks of excellence that we see in others - just as the athletes of the highest caliber do at the Olympics - the unity in Christ is magnified to the glory of God.

Two other aspects of the Olympics stand out for me: how excellence is the primary goal and how excellence is honored by everyone. Athletes may come from countries where the leaders do not speak to one another, but the athletes themselves show respect and deep appreciation for one another across those artificial boundaries. They hug and congratulate each other for successes and console one another during stumbles. Excellence recognizes excellence in the essence and outshines the non-essentials.



Unity

By: Teresa Wiegman



It is sad to see the disunity of our country. I cannot remember it being so divided. As Christians, we are called to be in unity because we are the body of Christ. Jesus prayed the following as he was in the garden of Gethsemane, waiting to be betrayed:

"I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:20-21)

It is of the utmost importance to remember our common identity: unity in Jesus Christ. Paul talks about the unity of the body and our common identity in Ephesians 4:2-6:

"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

Paul knew about division in the church and wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10:

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."

Unity(cont)

How do we apply our Christian beliefs to what we see happening today? Paul says in Colossians 3:14:

"And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity."

Love, not hate, is the binding force. Maintaining unity requires a spirit of peace and a willingness to forgive each other. Unity is something that must be intentionally maintained in love. It cannot be forced.

Peter says in 1 Peter 3:8:

"Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble."

As followers of Jesus, we are called to have love and acceptance, gentleness and patience, and humility. Bullying people into following Jesus will never work. Forcing people to follow Christ will never work. We must be a body of Christ who cares for the orphans, the widows, the poor, the sick, the imprisoned, the immigrants, the downtrodden, the homeless, and the addicted. We must be the hands and feet of Jesus.

We are to have compassion for each other and not see them as weak. We are to love our enemies, not seek revenge. God says, "Vengeance is mine." We are to bless our enemies and not curse them. We are called to be the kinder person, the more compassionate person, the peacemaker, the representative of Christ.

Show consideration for others. Respect. Humility. Treat others with kindness, especially in times of disagreement. We must be the ones to reach out with the olive branch and be the peacemakers. Pray together, if possible; otherwise, pray for each other.

Paul writes in Romans 12:16:

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited."

Jesus wanted us to love each other, not put each other down, not call each other names, not spread lies about each other, or gossip. We should build each other up. We should think of others as better than ourselves. Approach others with the understanding that no one is better than another. We should work together and pray together, and go through the hard parts of life together.

Finally, as Americans in the body of Christ, we may be on the red side, or we may be on the blue side, or we may be on the white side. Our flag is red, white, and blue. We need all our fellow Americans to be the United States of America. Pray for our country to regain unity. Keep in mind, this unity starts small. In our homes. In our churches, in our neighborhoods and communities. And then it grows. There is division from the top down. Let's make a difference where we are and when we can. Keep being kind. Keep loving and forgiving and being the hands and feet of Christ. Be part of the solution for Unity. In Jesus' precious name we pray. Amen

Stewardship as an Act of Trust and Unity in Christ

By: Chrys Sahgal

We often speak of stewardship as the faithful management of God's gifts—our time, talents, and resources—not for our own glory, but for the building up of God's kingdom. Yet stewardship is not merely a financial matter or a seasonal campaign; it is a deeply spiritual practice, one that reflects our trust in God and our unity as the body of Christ.

Trusting the Giver

At the heart of stewardship lies a question of trust. Do we truly believe that God provides? In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus reminds us not to worry about what we will eat or wear, but to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." This is not a call to passivity, but to faithful trust—trust that our lives are held in the hands of a gracious and generous God.

When we offer back to God from what we have—our money, our time, our skills—we are saying with our lives: "God, I trust You." Stewardship becomes not a burden, but a joyful response to grace. It is a way of saying thank you, of acknowledging that all we have is a gift from the One who knows and loves us deeply.

Unity in the Body

But stewardship is not just a personal act—it is also communal. In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul paints a beautiful picture of the Church as one body with many parts, each uniquely gifted and indispensable. "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good" (1 Corinthians 12:7). The resources we steward are not for our benefit alone, but for the flourishing of the whole body.

In our congregation, we live out this unity when we share what we have for the good of others—when someone brings a meal to a grieving family, when we teach in Sunday School, when we give to mission partners near and far. These acts, both big and small, weave us together in a tapestry of grace and service. Just look at how we have come together as a community to rally around Jeaneen as evidence of this.

Rooted in Scripture, Growing in Grace

As we read, pray, and reflect together, we are reminded that stewardship is not a strategy, but a spiritual discipline—a means of grace that shapes our hearts and our community. It teaches us to live generously, not from scarcity, but from abundance.

Stewardship...(cont)

We are also reminded of the power of community. Our faith is not a solitary journey, but a shared pilgrimage.

May our lives reflect that trust.

May our church embody that unity.

And may our service bear witness to the goodness of God.

An Invitation to Reflect and Act

As we move through this season together—whether it be fall stewardship, mission outreach, or simply the rhythm of church life—let us each ask:

- What has God entrusted to me in this season?
- Where am I being invited to trust more deeply?
- How might I use what I have to build up the body of Christ?

Let us also encourage one another. Sometimes we may feel that what we can offer is small—but in God's economy, even a mustard seed can move mountains. Stewardship is not about equal gifts, but about faithful response.

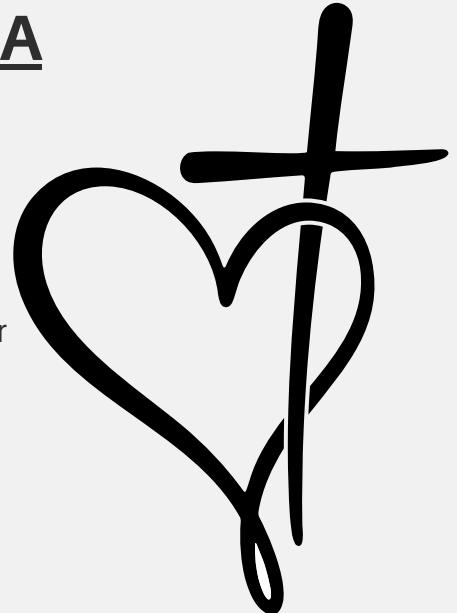
In the end, stewardship is not about what we give, but about who we are becoming: a people of grace, bound together in love, trusting in the One who "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20).



1ST PRES SANTA CLARA

By: Cathy Paz

How do you say goodbye when love is so strong
We'll see each other again and it's not that long.



God has strengthen me and I grew up this year
So many things are now clear and now I hear.

Healing was a part of all of this on wings of eagles.
God's Love revealed nothing to compare, equals.

All the heartache and sadness that was leading me
To a place of wonderment, peace, joy and set free.

I hold you all in love and memories never forgotten.
Even though I pulled away afraid of Love gotten.

When love is so strong and yet to show it hurts.
It came along with fear and times in only spirits.

I truely love all of you with God's Love so Devine.
YOU'VE all shared in brining my life shared, aligned.

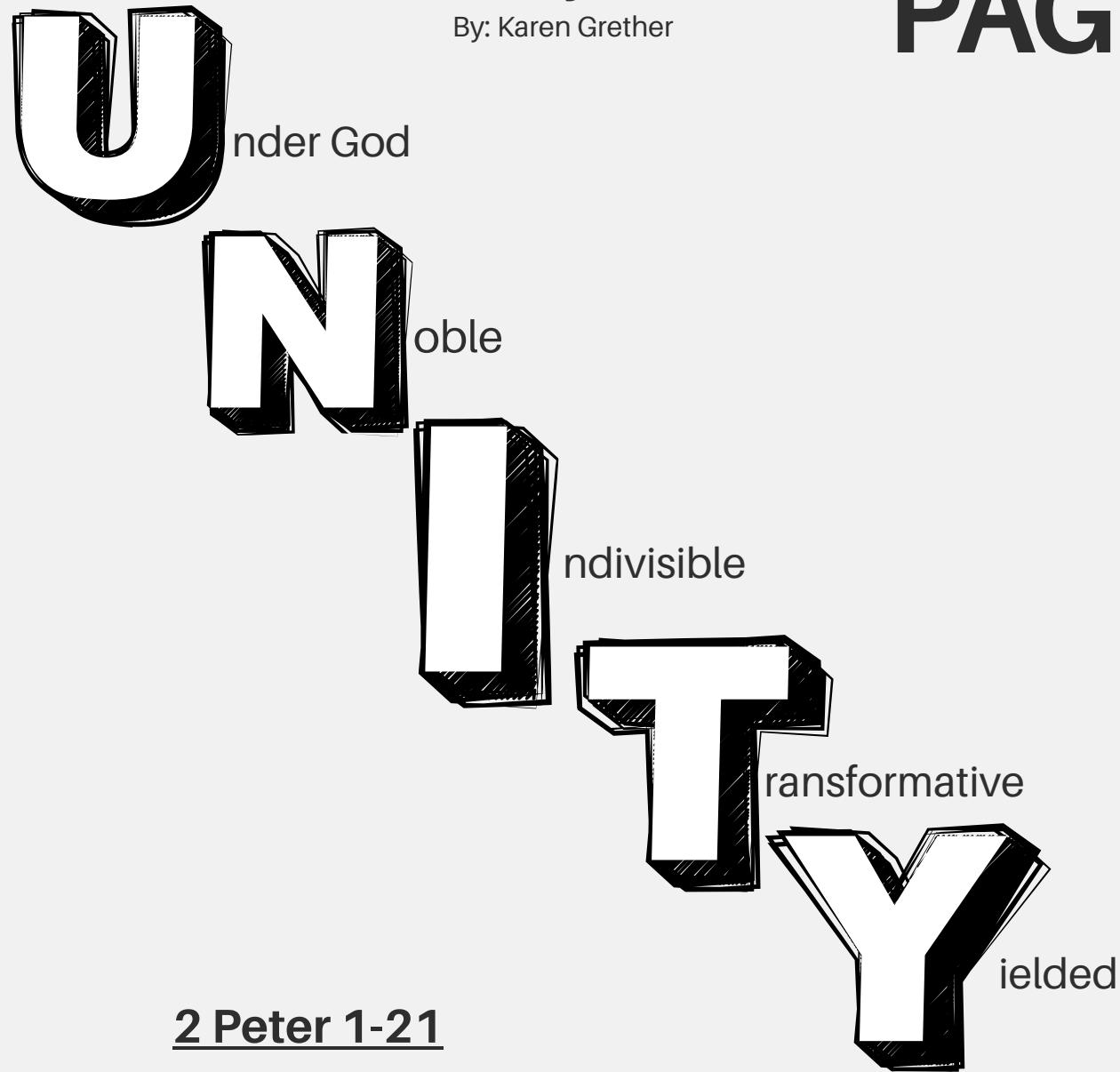
To God's Love, Peace, Freedom and intimacy with Him.
We all now are bound together united in one HYMN.

To God be the Glory great things He has done.
To the Great I AM you made us all to be in one.

Unity Is

By: Karen Grether

PAGE 7



2 Peter 1-21

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: ² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. Confirming One's Calling and Election³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters^[a], make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Prophecy of Scripture

¹² So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."^[b] ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Do we value who we are and what we have been given? Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus. He was forgiven and received the Holy Spirit. So are we. We can't fix ourselves as Dennis has said in his sermon. It is time to embrace and learn from the saints who came before us. It says in Hebrews 3:8 "do not harden your hearts..." Jesus heal our union with You.



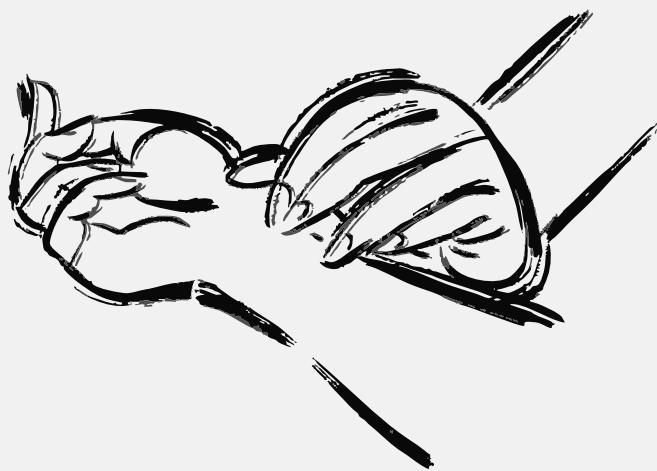
Musings on Unity:

By: Rev. Dennis Woodsmall

The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians with words that reverberate through the ages: "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all" (Eph. 4:3-6).

Unity is not an accidental feature of the church, nor is it a polite ideal we may aspire to if convenient. It is the very nature of Christ's body. In a fractured world where nations, families, and even churches splinter under the weight of suspicion, ideology, and pride, the call to unity stands as both a gift and a command.

From the beginning, God's plan was to gather all things together in Christ (Eph. 1:10). Unity, therefore, is not a mere strategy for church growth but the very heartbeat of redemption..



- **The Body of Christ:** In 1Corinthians 12, Paul employs the rich metaphor of the body. Each member is distinct, yet no member is dispensable. "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you.'" In Christ, diversity is not an obstacle but the very means by which the body flourishes.
- **The Prayer of Jesus:** In John 17, our Lord's high priestly prayer asks that his disciples may all be one." This unity is patterned after the oneness of the Father and the Son. It is not simply organizational but profoundly relational—a communion of love rooted in God Himself.
- **The Early Church:** Acts 2 portrays believers devoted to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. Their unity was tangible, marked by shared possessions, mutual care, and joyful worship.

Musings on Unity (Cont)

Thus, biblical unity is not uniformity. It is not the flattening of difference, but the harmony of difference under one Lord. It is based on the unity of the spirit in each member.

Theologians through the ages have insisted that the unity of the church is not optional. The Nicene Creed confesses: "We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church." Unity is not only a sociological good but a theological necessity.

Unity, therefore, is simultaneously gift and task: given by the Spirit, yet requiring the diligence of God's people to "maintain the bond of peace."

In our present context, unity is tested by many forces:

1) Cultural Divisions: Ethnic, political, and social tensions often creep into the church. If left unchecked, they divide communities meant to embody reconciliation.

2) Personal Pride: Pride whispers that my gifts are superior, my preferences weightier, my voice louder. Yet unity requires humility, the willingness to consider others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

3) Doctrinal Disputes: While truth must never be sacrificed, we must distinguish between the core confession of the gospel and secondary matters where charity may prevail.

The danger is clear: when unity fractures, our witness to the world falters. Jesus declared, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). The credibility of our mission rests, in part, on the quality of the body of Christ. How then shall we keep the unity entrusted to us?

- **Prayerful Dependence:** Unity is the work of the Spirit, not mere human ingenuity. We must pray as Jesus prayed, asking the Father to bind us together in love.
- **Practices of Reconciliation:** When conflict arises, as it surely will, the church must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and eager to forgive. Forgiveness is not weakness but strength, for it imitates the cross.
- **Shared Mission:** Nothing unites the church more than laboring side by side in the gospel. A community that serves the poor, proclaims the Word, and lifts high the name of Christ finds its unity deepened through shared labor.
- **Hospitality and Fellowship:** Around the table—whether the Eucharist or the family meal—we taste the grace of belonging. Hospitality disarms suspicion and knits hearts together.

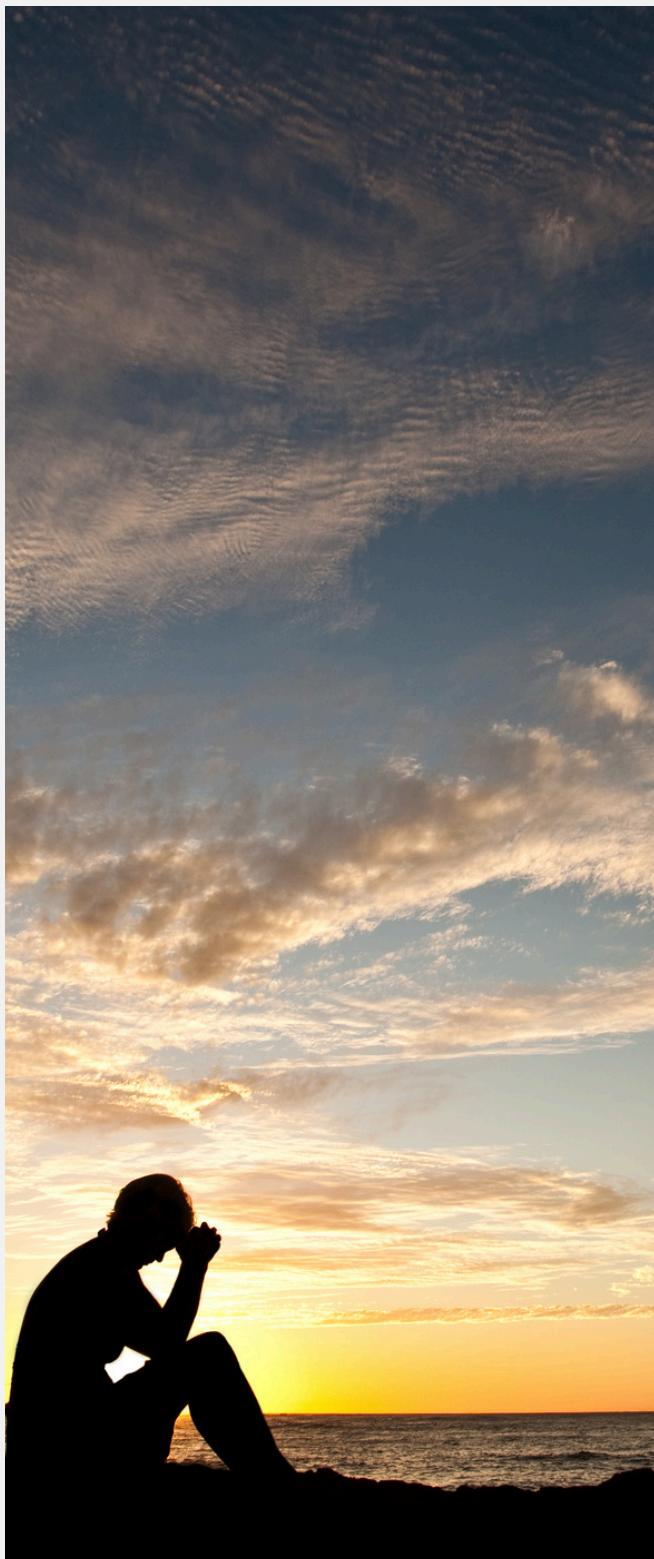
Musings on Unity (Cont)

Unity does not mean the absence of conflict but rather, it means that in Christ, we have something deeper than all divisions. We belong to one family, one baptism, one Spirit.

In times of difficulty, remember Paul's exhortation to the Colossians: "Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:14). Love is the bond that secures unity.

The world is watching. When the church fractures along the same lines as society, our proclamation is muted. But when the church demonstrates unity amidst diversity, humility amidst pride, reconciliation amidst hostility—then the world sees a glimpse of the kingdom of God. Paul seemed pretty convinced that when the world could witness a community that existed in love, security, joy, hope and the reality of Christ, they were be drawn to it . Beloved, unity is our gift, our calling, and our witness. May we strive to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, until that day when every tribe and tongue will worship before the Lamb, one person, one voice, one eternal song. We have a small community. Where it is more difficult at times and also manageable to keep the unity. I can preach on this and teach on it but if we as individuals don't choose to see it a vital base for the presence of God, we will not stive for it. It is a gift, a privilege and the call of the Lord for us today, right here and for His purposes.

Blessings,
Dennis



"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity!"
(Psalm 133:1)

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!

Call for Submissions



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OCTOBER UPCOMING EVENTS

Yeehaw! Chili Cook-Off Coming Up! 🌶️🤠

Sunday, October 26th | After the Sermon |

Get ready for a'good time at our Western-Themed Chili Cook-Off on Sunday, October 26th! Dust off your cowboy boots, throw on your best western gear, and come hungry for some delicious chili and warm fellowship after the sermon.

Think your chili has what it takes?

If you haven't signed up to compete yet and would like to, please see Kathy Pedone—there's still time to join the fun!

Mark your calendars, invite a friend, and let's make this a Sunday to remember!



PAGE 3

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD:

SHARING GOD'S LOVE AROUND THE WORLD

A MINISTRY OF SAMARITAN'S PURSE

Operation Christmas Child (OCC) is a powerful outreach of Samaritan's Purse, bringing the Good News of God's love and salvation to children in need in over 170 countries. For more than 30 years, this ministry has reached children living in areas affected by war, poverty, abuse, or the loss of parents, offering them tangible gifts and the eternal hope found in Jesus Christ.

What's in a Shoebox?

When you pack a shoebox, you're doing more than giving a child a gift —you're opening the door to life-changing opportunity:

- Every child who receives a gift-filled shoebox also receives "The Greatest Gift" booklet, introducing them to the story of Jesus.
- Children are then invited to join a 12-lesson discipleship course called "The Greatest Journey." Those who complete the program receive a New Testament Bible in their own language.
- These simple gifts and messages have resulted in churches being planted, families restored, and entire communities transformed.

Shoeboxes include school supplies, hygiene items, toys, and a personal letter—all lovingly packed by someone like you. (See the "How to Pack a Shoebox" brochure available in the FPC Social Hall for details.)



Two Ways to Pack a Shoebox:

1. Build Your Own Shoebox (Physical):

- Boxes are available at FPC.
- Fill them with fun and meaningful items.
- Include **\$10 per box** to cover shipping, training, and materials.
- **Return boxes to FPC by Sunday, November 16th.**

2. Build a Shoebox Online:

<https://www.samaritanspurse.org/operation-christmas-child/buildonline/>

- Samaritan's Purse offers an easy online option—\$30 per box.
- Boxes are filled and shipped for you.
- Online boxes can be sent year-round!

OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD (CONT)

Want to Get More Involved?

If God is stirring your heart to do more, consider becoming a year-round volunteer with the Silicon Valley OCC Team. You'll help spread the Gospel even further through training, organizing, and outreach.

Contact: Tess at tess328@aol.com for more information.

Important Dates:

- **National Collection Week:** 3rd Week of November
- **FPC Shoebox Deadline:** Sunday, November 16th
- **Shoeboxes will be delivered to local drop-off locations, packed into cartons, and shipped to the Fullerton Processing Center before reaching children in time for Christmas and beyond.**



**SEND
GOOD NEWS
AND
GREAT JOY**

PACK A SHOEBOX

Countries served: Phillipines, Thailand, Vanuatu, Cook Island, Madagascar, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea

Thank you for being a part of this global ministry. Every shoebox you pack brings hope, joy, and the message of Jesus to a child in need. Your faithfulness is changing the world—one box at a time.