



PResPRes

April 2026

Presbyterian Church of Novato, 710 Wilson Ave., Novato, CA 94947

“Entering the Wondrous World of an Ancient Collection of Writings”

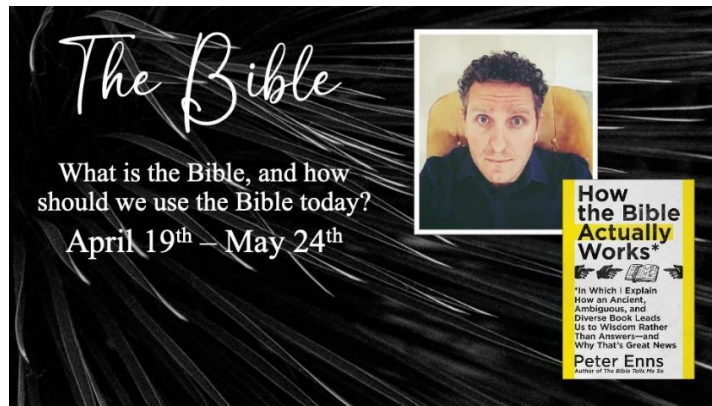
by Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff

Something happens toward the end of the Christian Calendar for those who love to follow Christ's story from Advent to Pentecost. A strange dissolution of momentum, a break in following a story that has been developing from infancy into adulthood, and then at Christ's ascension into eternal glory. As we move through Holy Week in the month of Advent and move toward Pentecost Sunday later in May, I wanted to invite you into a new spiritual journey. We have been following the story of Christ, but there are stories that created the very things Christ would come to complete and fulfill.

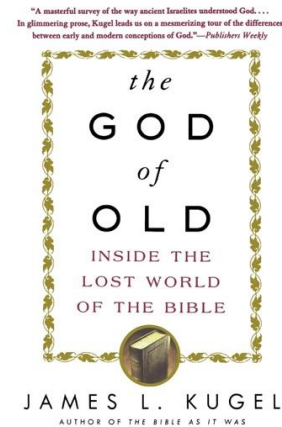
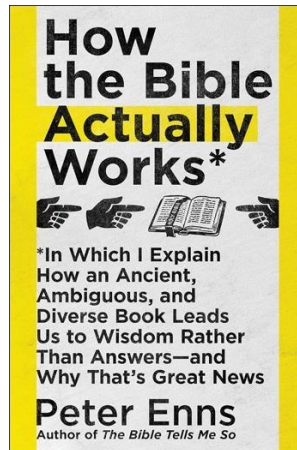
Before the New Testament presented the moving and dramatic story of Christ, the Hebrew Scriptures offered stories for Jesus to consider in his own life. Dramatic redemptive events that foreshadowed that someone greater was coming, and with them a greater salvation. Again and again, the writers and editors of the New Testament slowed down to draw connections to the Hebrew Scripture stories (more often than not, those stories were read in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, called the Septuagint). You could say, without the Hebrew Scriptures, Christ's story would lack a narrative structure. There would be no people he was born into, no dramatic salvation required for those people and their neighbors, and no sense of divine presence that Christ reimagined and fulfilled in the New Testament stories. Jesus not only entered the world “in the fullness of time” (Galatians 4:405), he entered lively sacred stories that we today call the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus's life turned a page in that story, giving birth to new storytellers who recounted God's presence among the people of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Today, we call the Hebrew Scriptures and the Greek New Testament “the Bible.” Even the name is ancient, dating back to the 2nd century BCE. It became a Hellenistic Jewish way of referring to Scripture as “*τα βιβλία*,” which is translated as “the books.” The word “*βιβλία*” was derived from a Phoenician city called Byblos, known for exporting papyrus used in the making of scrolls. As we move toward completing the story of Christ on Pentecost Sunday, I want to invite you to explore the stories of “the books” that inspired Christ's life and ministry.

There are two ways you can enter the wondrous world of the ancient collection of writings we call “the Bible.” (1) You can join me in my adult education class on Sundays from April 19th to May 24th. Over six weeks, we will explore the nature of the Bible and close our time by looking at how the Bible's nature should inform how we read and use the Bible today. My adult education class will be less focused on the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures and more on the literary history of their creation and the transmission of the books over time, as well as the ancient worlds that shaped and informed their content.



If you are unable to attend my class called “The Bible,” there is another way you can enter the strange world of the Bible. (2) You can consider reading the following three books in the order suggested below, moving from the stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, to how they were formed and shared, and finally, to how they were read by the earliest Jewish readers.



Begin with Ellen F. Davis’s wonderful entry-level book called *Opening Israel’s Scriptures*. Davis takes you book-by-book through the Hebrew Scriptures, introducing you to the stories and messages of each book. Ellen F. Davis is the Amos Ragan Kearns Distinguished Professor of Bible and Practical Theology at Duke Divinity School (<https://divinity.duke.edu/faculty/ellen-davis>). Among her contributions is her invitation to a deeper appreciation of how early Jewish interpreters understood the biblical stories in the Hebrew Scriptures and how Christian readers received them afresh in light of Christ. She also explores what she calls biblical agrarianism, noting that much of the history of God’s people was spent in agrarian societies that lived very close to the lands they called home.

After you have a good understanding of the larger stories of the Hebrew Scriptures, step back and consider how the Bible’s ancient nature should inform our reading and use it today. Peter Enns’s book *How the Bible Works* offers you an entry-level exploration of the nature of the Bible. Peter Enns is the Abram S. Clemens Professor of Biblical Studies at Eastern University (<https://www.eastern.edu/peter-enns>). Among his contributions is his invitation to his readers to consider reading the Bible on its own terms, as an ancient book that behaves like books of its time.

Enns consistently situates the books of the Bible in relation to what is called “parallel literature,” books that share the same literary genre, raise similar questions, and, at times, even include similar characters and events. He also places the books of the Bible in conversation with ancient works that appear to have intentionally interpreted and reflected on the Hebrew Scriptures. When the Bible is read in light of its parallel literature and with a grasp of how it was first interpreted, modern readers read it on its own terms, as a book deeply relevant to the times and cultures of its creation and early transmission.

With the groundwork provided by Davis’s wonderful introduction to the stories and messages of the books of the Hebrew Bible, and Enn’s thoughtful placing of the Bible in its ancient context and early reception history, you will have the ability to appreciate the gift of James L. Kugel’s book *The God of the Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*. Kugel’s book will give you the opportunity to slow down and pay careful attention to the meaning of a few biblical stories and events in light of their ancient context and early Jewish reception history. James L. Kugel is the professor emeritus in the Bible department at Bar Ilan University in Israel and the Harry M. Starr Professor Emeritus of Classical and Modern Hebrew Literature at Harvard University (<https://www.jameskugel.com>). Among his contributions is the way Kugel shares the early Jewish reception history of stories and characters from the Hebrew Bible with readers at both the academic and popular levels. Kugel is arguably one of the most significant voices in the world today for how the Bible was read by its earliest Jewish interpreters. If you find great value in his book *The God of the Old*, consider moving on to his much fuller treatment, *The Bible as it Was* or *How to Read the Bible: A Guide to Scripture, Then and Now*.

As you move through the Christian Calendar, following the story of Christ from Advent to Pentecost, may you enter a rich season of reflection on the ancient collection of books that inspired and shaped Christ’s life and ministry, the Hebrew Scriptures. You, my friends, are part of this wondrous, ancient story; you are the pages being written today!

Pastor Tony



Session

Session Highlights – February & March 2026

At the February 26, 2026 Session meeting:

- George Pilloton resigned after 3 years of service as a Commissioner to the Presbytery. The Nominating Committee will search for a new Commissioner.
- Session reviewed an Anti-Racism policy developed by the Presbytery. All congregations must adopt an anti-racism policy per the Book of Order, G-3.0106.
- Session agreed to work on a modern, Family-oriented style of worship in consultation with the Worship Team.
- Elected the following people as officers of the corporation to meet state requirements for religious, non-profit entities:
 - Brad Praun, CEO
 - George Pilloton, CFO, Treasurer
 - Kathy Takemoto, Secretary
- Session approved the election of 7 – 12 members on the Pastor Nominating Committee. Participants will be discerned by the Nominating Committee.
- The Mission Study Team provided an update. A congregational survey will be distributed shortly.
- The Endowment Committee approved the use up to \$110,000 to cover the cost of the Engagement Group work. \$66,000 in directed donations has been received.
- George Pilloton will serve as a “Bridge” between PCN and the work of the Engagement Group. Under the direction of the Engagement Group, George will assemble a volunteer work group of 12 people comprised of PCN staff, anchor members (long-time members) and PCN member stakeholders. In April, this group will participate in a 3-day “Kick-Off,” Zoom meeting with the Engagement Group.

At the March 18, 2026 Session meeting:

Session approved:

- Enhanced health benefit plans for full-time staff.
- Rev. Cathy Chang to preach at PCN on October 4, 2026, World Communion Sunday. Rev. Chang currently works for PC USA and was formerly supported in part by PCN’s mission funds.
- An anti-racism policy for PCN based on the Presbytery policy. PCN can tailor the policy as needed to educate the congregation about anti-racism.
- Moving forward with a modern, family and children friendly Order of Worship
- The submission of a grant application through the Marin County Gun Safety Collaborative to provide training on Gun Violence Restraining Orders.
- An updated price schedule for Memorials and Receptions.

- Session learned that the re-keying of the church campus will begin on April 13, 2026, coordinated by the Property Team. Updated key control guidelines will be enforced.
- The Mission Study Team invites all congregants to complete a survey as part of their discernment work. The survey is on-line with hard copies also available.
- The 12-member PCN Engagement Group team has completed all required tasks prior to the first working meeting on April 28, 2026.

Kathy Takemoto, Clerk of Session



MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

A MATTER OF BALANCE is the most widely implemented nationwide fall-prevention program, and it's coming to PCN! We are limited to 15 committed participants for this two-hour, eight-week course being held on Tuesdays from 10 to 12 p.m. beginning April 21 and going through June 9. Please let Sally Carbonaro know if you're interested in participating.

MISSION

Where your treasure is, there your heart will lie also. ~Matthew 6:21

Below you will find evidence of the many places where your hearts, time and money are making a difference, both locally and abroad.



SAVE THE DATE!

"For the Love of Mothers"

Gilead House's 2026 Fundraising Event
Saturday, April 25th ~ 2:00-5:30pm
at West Wind Wines in beautiful Nicasio

Join us for Art, Wine, Music and Heart — Supporting Single Moms and Kids
Tickets include an only in Marin beautiful winery in Nicasio. Enjoy the cocktail party where you are free to arrive anytime during the event. There will be music, drinks, and delicious food.

Mark your calendars... For more information or tickets:

<https://secure.ggiv.com/event/fortheloveofmothers2026/>

Or contact Carolyn Gerrans at 415-328-1578 grace624@comcast.net



Hope in Full Bloom

Tuesday, April 28, 2026
11:30AM - 1:00PM
680 Wilson Avenue Center in Novato



Dear Friends at Presbyterian Church of Novato,

Spring is in bloom, and so is hope. [Tickets are now on sale](#) for NMCS's Spring Luncheon, *Hope in Full Bloom*. Join us on Tuesday, April 28th at our 680 Wilson Center in Novato for a meaningful afternoon rooted in community, resilience, and impact. We hope you'll be part of this special gathering. In gratitude, *Cheryl Paddack*



Mission Study Team Update

Congregational Survey Sent Out!

The Mission Study Team wants to invite everyone in the PCN community to participate in the short congregational survey that was sent out in an email this past Monday, March 16. This survey was developed as part of our work to better understand our congregation and how we can faithfully move forward together, especially in our upcoming search for an installed pastor. The survey only takes about **6 to 10 minutes to complete**, but your feedback will make a big difference as we plan for the future of our church.

We encourage everyone in the congregation, including our Live Stream viewers as well as any visitors, to take a few minutes to complete the survey online. Completing it online makes it much easier for us to collect, review and analyze the responses. **For those who prefer, printed copies will also be available for you to fill out and return to the church office.** A volunteer will enter your responses into the system.

Your input is very important, and we hope everyone will participate! Every response helps us hear the full voice of our congregation as we seek God's guidance for the future of PCN. We appreciate you taking the time to help shape that future!

Please also stay tuned for upcoming information on how to participate in discussion groups that will be happening in April! These sessions will give you an opportunity to say a little more about your hopes for our future.

God's Blessings,
The Mission Study Team (Robert Coleman, Karen Marks, Becky Moser, Michael Moser, Delane Ramser and Greg Smith)

Meet the Safety Team! Dedicated to Enhancing Safety at PCN



Bruce Stahley, Melodie Baird, Audrey Boland, Nancy Gill, Sydney Fletcher (chair), Sam Gill, Delane Ramser, Walt Searway. Not Pictured: Beth Flynn, Roland Tolosa, Diane Orsini Tarkman, and Sunday Safety Officers Garrick Fong, John Marks, and Michael Moser.

You've probably seen us around PCN in our yellow vests, but what exactly do we do?

Our Mission: The Safety Team at the Presbyterian Church of Novato works to create a safe and secure environment where members and visitors can come together for worship and fellowship. Our goal is to serve in a way that allows everyone to experience the love and life of Jesus in a safe and meaningful way.

Here are some ways we've worked to live up to this mission.

- To better prepare for emergencies, we've gathered and stored important supplies like first-aid kits, blankets, and water, ensuring we're ready to help when needed.
- We were grateful to have Novato Fire guide us on the safest ways to evacuate our sacred space in case of a fire. Thanks to their advice, we updated our campus evacuation map and even held PCN's very first evacuation drill!
- We brought together and trained two wonderful teams of Safety Officers: one dedicated to guiding everyone safely during emergency evacuations, and another to support those with mobility issues during Sunday services.
- We created the very first PCN Emergency Guide, packed with useful tips on how to handle different emergencies. We also shared copies in every PCN room to ensure everyone has easy access to this helpful resource.
- We created a new space in the Sanctuary that's easily accessible for wheelchair and walker users.

There is so much more needing our attention! A few of our current projects include:

- Re-keying all PCN doors and establishing a more efficient key distribution system.
- Recruiting additional Safety Officers and improving our training procedures.
- Planning more evacuation drills, including an evening drill for Grace Generation.

If you're interested in joining us for these projects or serving as a Safety Officer, please reach out!
We'd be excited to welcome you to our team. Contact any of us for more information.

Rise[®] AGAINST HUNGER

Last Saturday, 35 amazing volunteers came together to package over 10,000 meals, bringing PCN's all-time total to more than **100,000** meals packed!

To put it in perspective: **10,000 meals feeds 47 families for an entire year.** You do the math!
Incredible work, PCN family and friends!

A huge shout-out to **Troop 200** and Scout Master Eric—along with Lucas, Logan, Rigden, Adam, and Cannon—who not only helped with setup but also stayed to package over 1,000 meals themselves!



As these meals go out into the world, we pray for the families who will receive them. And we give thanks to God for the blessings we often take for granted—food, shelter, community, and the freedom to worship.

What a beautiful example of faith in action. ❤️🙏







FINISH THE FIGHT



Relay for Life is the major fundraiser for the American Cancer Society, which funds research, rides, wigs, and lodging. PCN has a team registered to take part in this event.

We, as a church, are taking part in Relay for Life for the mission and outreach. In the past we have been known as a missional church. We are challenged with serving others beyond the the walls of PCN. Many of us already do that in various ways. However, only twice a year are we clearly able to show the community that we are Christians with publicly visible signs: The Buckaroo Breakfast and Relay for Life. Wouldn't it be a thrill to have a great turnout of church members at Relay on July 18-19? What a way to show the larger community what a great community of faith we have.

Here is the link to sign up: https://secure.acsevents.org/site/STR?pg=entry&fr_id=111826

If you need help with registering or you have any questions, please contact Marion Hune @ 1.415.287.2146 or by email: crabbyone46@verizon.net.

How else can you participate? Be a fundraiser and ask your company to match donations raised; purchase a luminaria, or better yet, become the luminaria chair. You can also help Sally Carbonaro and I manage the team.

WESTMINSTER WOODS



[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Summer is just around the corner, and we want to make sure you know that **registration for Summer Camp at Westminster Woods is OPEN** and we can't wait to welcome you and your camper back at camp!

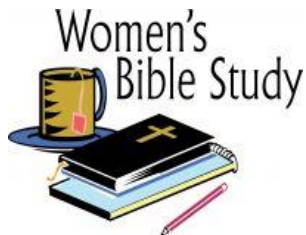
Below you can find all of our summer camp offerings! There really is something for everyone!

We're so excited to spend a magical summer with you in 2026!!

Session 1 June 22nd - 27th	Session 2 June 29th - July 4th	Session 3 July 6th - 11th	Session 4 July 14th - 17th
<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>WOODS TO WAVES (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>HEARTWOOD CIT PROGRAM (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>HEARTWOOD CIT PROGRAM (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>FRIENDSHIP CAMP (For adults with developmental disabilities) (AGES 18-65)</p>
Session 5 July 19th - 24th	Session 6 July 26th - 31st	Session 7 August 21st - 24th	SCAN QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION
<p>CAMP SOULSPRING (AGES 8-17)</p> <p>SOULSPRING CIT PROGRAM (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>CAMP SOULSPRING (AGES 8-17)</p> <p>SOULSPRING CIT PROGRAM (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>FAMILY CAMP (ALL AGES)</p>	

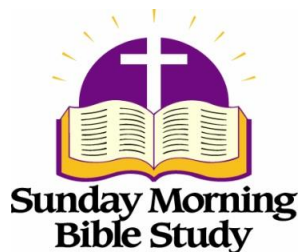


The office is now open Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon. We are looking for volunteers to help out in the office. Please see Sally Carbonaro if you have any questions.



Are you interested in a closer walk and relationship with God? The Women's Bible Study group is open to all women. We gather every Thursday morning at 10am - 11:30am, on zoom for study, fellowship and prayers. Coffee and PJ's are optional. We are currently doing a free form study on the Old Testament - Numbers. We'd love to have you. For more information please reach out to Becky Praun, beckypraun@yahoo.com. 415 472 -1733

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86913616907?pwd=gsbDqww6cuwPq9qtsmCVMQ2ZE28u6P.1>
Meeting ID: 869 1361 6907 Passcode: pcnovato



All signs point to Jesus! Come join us via Zoom Sunday mornings from 8 to 9 a.m. Your study leaders are Larry Dacquisto (415.577.2115), Karen Carlson and Doris Dooley.

Link for the Zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82970812537?pwd=eGZESUo3dzQ4NXh3WFFNT3AvQmpDdz09>

Meeting ID: 829 7081 2537 Passcode: pcnovato

Ushers & Greeters Ministry

Are you a newer member of our PCN family? Are you looking for a way to meet people and be of service? An ideal solution for you might be to volunteer as a member of the PCN Usher and Greeters Ministry. Be part of the team that is an integral part of each Sunday morning's worship service. For more information, contact Bill Bradfield at 415.408.3427.



REQUESTING A PRAYER BLANKET is easy. Email Tonya Church or Carol Robinson. Give us the recipient's first and last name, address, phone number, and what colors they like. We try to send a prayer blanket that is meaningful for the recipient. Questions? Contact Tonya at tonya.church@comcast.net or Carol at carol001@comcast.net.



MEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Come join us for study and fellowship. We meet every **Wednesday at 7:15 a.m.** via Zoom. All men are welcome. To be added to the Zoom contact list, contact Walt Campbell at 415.497.5157 or email walterlcampbell@aol.com.



Here's an important number to jot down: 415.472.0911. This is the **non-injury** lift assist phone number from the Novato Fire Department. If you or someone you know has fallen and you can't lift him/her, the fire department will come help!