

The Presbyterian Church of Novato
710 Wilson Avenue
Novato, CA 94947

Return Service Requested



January 1 – Happy New Year! (office closed)
January 6 – The Engagement Project begins
January 6 – Grace Generation resumes



PresPress

January 2026

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

**“Never Alone, Always Reaching Forward With Others”
by Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff**

“I’d like to phone a friend, please” is the unforgettable phrase from arguably what may be the most winning TV show in history, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire?* With around 12 separate million-dollar winners, and a very high rate of guests winning, everything seemed possible for viewers. Again and again, in more than 3,000 episodes of this popular show, contestants got 30 seconds to phone a friend for help with a question that stumped them. It is human nature to reach out to others when we face questions we cannot resolve on our own. Today, when businesses and communities turn to others for help, there is a phrase we use to describe that practice: “turning to consultants.”

When did the practice of spiritual communities and spiritual leaders turning to consultants for help begin? Many people point to a significant moment in the life and ministry of Moses when someone near Moses, an extended family member, acts as a consultant of sorts, offering Moses guidance for how to ‘outsource’ some of his leadership burdens and responsibilities. This occurs in Leviticus 18:13-23:

¹³ The next day, Moses took his seat to serve as judge for the people, and they stood around him from morning till evening. ¹⁴ When his father-in-law saw all that Moses was doing for the people, he said, “What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge, while all these people stand around you from morning till evening?”

¹⁵ Moses answered him, “Because the people come to me to seek God’s will. ¹⁶ Whenever they have a dispute, it is brought to me, and I decide between the parties and inform them of God’s decrees and instructions.”

¹⁷ Moses’ father-in-law replied, “What you are doing is not good. ¹⁸ You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone. ¹⁹ Listen now to me and I will give you some advice, and may God be with you. You must be the people’s representative before God and bring their disputes to him. ²⁰ Teach them his decrees and instructions, and show them the way they are to live and how they are to behave. ²¹ But select capable men from all the people – men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain and appoint them as officials over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. ²² Have them serve as judges for the people at all times, but have them bring every difficult case to you; the simple cases they can decide themselves. That will make your load lighter, because they will share it with you. ²³ If you do this and God so commands, you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.”

Moses did indeed heed the counsel he received, and because of that, he was freed up to perform other critical acts of caregiving for Israel. Fast-forward to the early Apostolic movement and we witness a similar occurrence in the creation of the Deacons, which alleviated the work of the Apostles at tables, to spend their energies elsewhere (Acts 6).

Today, in the modern church, consulting has taken on a much more particular, focused form. In the 1970s and 1980s, under the influence of leaders like Donald McGavern and C. Peter Wagner, The Church Growth Movement popularized pragmatic guidance for churches to address common, repeating growth challenges they were facing. Some common consulting requests churches make of faith-based consulting agencies include strategic and church-growth guidance, church-health studies, leadership-development models and practices, church-conflict resolution, capital projects and capital campaigns, church-rejuvenation and renewal, church-planting, and church staffing assistance.

Some of the bigger names in the world of church consultation include “The Unstuck Group (<https://theunstuckgroup.com>),” “Auxano (<https://auxano.com/church-consulting>),” “Vanderbloemen (<https://info.vanderbloemen.com/>),” and “Christian Ministry Alliance (<https://christianministryalliance.org/services/consulting/>).” You may not know this, but the Presbyterian Church of Novato engaged the Brown Church Development Group consultants (<https://www.churchdevelopment.net>) to complete a 2019 discernment study that explored a more intentional reset of the church's staffing and leadership structure.

At this critical time of transition in the life of the church, as our Mission Study Committee undertakes its Mission Study Report to help offer guidance on the future Installed Pastor search, the Session of the Presbyterian Church of Novato is exploring a new consulting agency to resource the church as it considers the question of church growth. The consulting group we are exploring is called the Engagement Group (<https://www.engagement.group>). The Engagement Group offers a unique 360 resource that helps churches clarify how they hope to grow and what practices are vital in that church growth. In addition, the general counsel provides specific guidance on guest experiences and retention practices (assimilation), which aligns well with a special task team created by the Session in the winter of 2025, called the “Guest Friendly Church Task Team.”

As we continue to imagine the faithful future of the Presbyterian Church of Novato, we ‘phone a friend’ and practice the promise of God that we never face the future alone as an isolated church community, but rather as part of the broader body of Christ, with gifted consultants who have wisdom for the future.

Some of the books that explore the potential growth of the future church in the modern world include Thom Rainer and Eric Geiger’s book, *Simple Church*; Eddie Gibbs’ book, *ChurchNext*; Graham Tomlin’s book, *The Provocative Church*; Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Raymond Chang’s book, *Future-Focused Church*; and Andrew Root and Blair D. Bertrand’s book, *When Church Stops Working*.

We are on a great adventure, friends; an adventure we take with many others who have gone before us and join us in this present moment!



Session

Session Highlights – December 2025

At the December 17, 2025, Stated Session meeting:

- Session approved up to \$13,500 to replace computers for church staff. Current technology is at the end of its useful life.
- Session approved up to \$20,000 for the purchase of a new computer for the sanctuary with installation hardware, window tinting to protect the video cameras and provided security of the sanctuary and expand the sanctuary media booth to accommodate five workstations. The sanctuary computer crashed periodically, then crashed four times on Sunday, 12/14/2025, the Sunday of the children's program. The cause of the crashes was identified and will require replacement of damaged hardware.
- Approved contracting with The Engagement Group, which will provide a 360 Strategic Plan to help PCN grow the number of younger adults and families, assist with intentional strategic staffing models, and branding. Data from the final report may be useful in creating the Mission Study report. The cost of this contract will be covered by an anonymous donor.
- Approved the baptism of Cooper William Crane, son of Michael and Morgan Crane, grandson of Carol and Mike Robinson, on December 21, 2025, during worship.
- Members of the Mission Study team are Robert Coleman, Karen Marks, Becky Moser, Delane Ramser, and Greg Smith. The Presbytery will provide training and guidance.

The Nominating Committee will begin searching for new Elders, Deacons, and members for a Pastor Nominating Committee in the new year. All church officers (Elders, Deacons) and Pastor Nominating Committee members require approval by the congregation.

- Elder James Wood informed Session that three Troop 200 Eagle Scout projects are under discussion:
 - Enhancing the Meditation Garden
 - Building a cement walkway from the storage shed to the patio, making the movement of tables and chairs easier and safer
 - Demolition of the wall between Trevitt Hall and the music room

The Property Team will supervise all approved projects.

Kathy Takemoto, Clerk of Session



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.



Mission Friends –

Following are the results of the WONDERFUL Alternative Christmas Fair. THANK YOU to EVERYONE who made this a huge success this year!

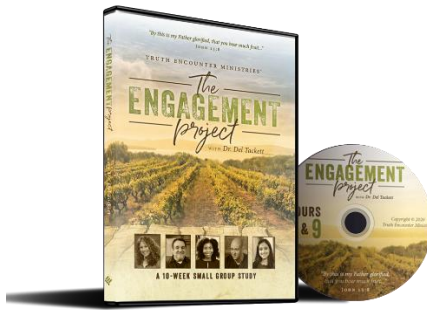
2025 Alternative Christmas Fair

Total: \$7,082

Faith in Practice	\$1,597
Homeward Bound	\$1,390
Products	\$832
Donations	\$558
Heifer International	\$1,012
Presbyterian Giving	\$ 857
Scouts	\$ 772
Hope Opens Doors	\$ 757
NOAH	\$ 697



Dear PCN family – Your Mission Team and Gilead House cannot thank you enough for your generous response to our annual Sharing Tree in the Narthex! Your gifts of more than \$1,400.00 will bring joy to the mothers and children making their homes there as the children get stable educations and the mothers get training in all kinds of skills and get back in the job market. Let's keep supporting this wonderful, life-changing organization in all the ways we can.

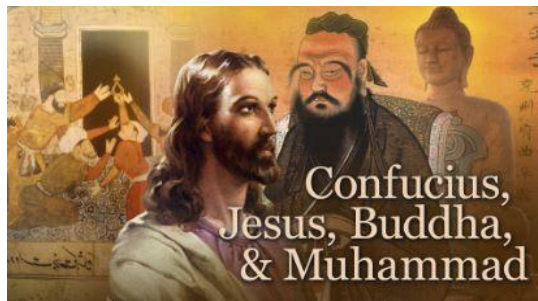


Ready for the next step?

The Engagement Project is Dr. Del Tackett's next set of small-group worldview tours. This is the sequel to ***The Truth Project***.

Join us Tuesday mornings in the Christensen room beginning January 6th from 10:00-11:30 for a video followed by inspirational discussion!

Dr. Tackett has a unique way of helping believers build a comprehensive, systematic biblical worldview. We hope you are able to join us!



Winter 2025 PCN Adult Learning Opportunity

PCN elder Walt Campbell will moderate a Great Courses video lecture and discussion group via Zoom in comparative religion entitled "Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad." The course lecturer is Mark Meusse, Ph.D., Director of the Asian Studies program at Rhodes College, Tennessee. The course will consist of 24 half-hour lectures to be viewed and then discussed over 12 Saturday mornings from 10:30 a.m. to approximately 12:00 p.m.

The group commenced November 22 and will conclude February 7. The course content covers the historical background of the culture in which each of the four spiritual teachers advanced new ideas and recruited followers, the teacher/exemplar's biography, and their key spiritual ideas and practices. Participants will receive a pdf copy of a course guide that summarizes each lecture, a weekly email with Zoom login credentials, and preparation tips and questions to facilitate group discussion. The course is open to non-PCN members. A small donation to cover the cost of course materials is appreciated. Participants will also receive Great Courses-plus credentials to stream lectures in order to catch up or make up missed sessions. If you are interested in participating, please email Walt at walterleecampbell@gmail.com.



The Deacons would like to thank everyone who helped to lovingly provide baked goods for the Celebration of Life services for Fred Holmes on November 22 and Lyle Borcharding on December 6. Our church is blessed with so many talented and generous bakers.

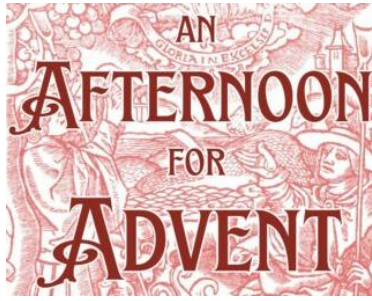
Thank you also to all those that stepped up to help set up, serve and clean up. We could not have done it without you ALL!

The Deacons are humbled by your show of love and devotion to these wonderful families.

Blessings,
Becky Praun, Reception Deacon and the PCN Deacons



A big thank you to Brian and Michael from Vintage Dog Ranch for the memorable 'live Nativity.' What a wonderful opportunity to hear about the animals and get up close and pet most of them. Seeing the new baby camel, Dune (four weeks old) and his mother Sahara was quite the treat, not to mention baby cow, Betsy Ross, the Lamb Ladies and Spumoni the donkey. The PCN teens were awesome in their nativity roles: Annie McMickin, Penny Kuroki, Sennett McMickin, Weston Stahley, Gio Carbonaro and Calvin Broadwater, as well as sheep-handlers Stephanie and Kimi Praun. And a special thank you to Brad Praun for 'shepherding' the traffic. Merry Christmas!



The Making of Advent Afternoon

Advent Afternoon planning started in a Hobby Lobby store when one of the committee members spotted Christmas fabric blankets on sale for 50% off. Text messages were exchanged to confirm the number we needed. As Becky Praun was shopping, Brad was not far behind loading the cart, and a major piece of Advent Afternoon was purchased. You may be thinking this is not that significant, but with the closing of all JoAnn stores earlier in the year, the Fellowship Team was thrilled to have this purchase out of the way.

The Fellowship Team focuses its efforts on the booths we will be doing and the food we are serving. The team works carefully through the details, and everyone's contributions are needed for this to be successful. We were not planning to do food and began to discuss this would be a big mistake, especially after the taco truck. Food was not going to happen unless someone stepped up to do the serving. Suzanne, our Finance Secretary, said yes, and the idea of the loaded baked potato bar was coming to life.

Tonya is our super shopper. She checked the current inventory of supplies we had, developed the list of supplies needed and started making the list. Here are most of the items we purchased and the quantities:

60 pounds of potatoes	10 pounds of onions
9 pounds of sour cream	12 peppers (red, yellow, orange)
8 pounds of cheddar cheese	10 cartons of broth
5 bags of bacon bits (100 ounces)	14 cans of white beans
8 bags of green onions	Salt and pepper packets
2.5 pounds of jalapenos	8 pounds of butter
Cookie sprinkles -- variety	Greens for swags
Paper plates (cookies and lunch)	Ribbon for decorations
Muffin cups	Pinecones, candy canes, red berries
6 pounds of powdered sugar	2 pounds of cream cheese
20 Christmas blankets – ready to make	Small white poinsettias

Staging and storing this quantity of supplies is the next challenge, and the bride's room was the perfect spot.

The prep for the day begins at least two weeks prior. All the blankets are squared up and cut, so finishing them can be done by anyone stopping by the table. The muffin cups are glued to the plates for the cookie decorating booth. The ribbon is cut, greens bundled and supplies readied for the swag

table. Christmas cards and pens were set out, with chairs at the table, so those stopping by could sit down and write. Most of the team members made two dozen cookies for the decorating table.

Planning our space for so much activity is just like playing Tetris. We try to make sure food does not get served too close to the Living Nativity, people are able to sit down for lunch, the floor in the Christensen room is not frosted and sprinkled, and all lines for coffee and food have a place to stand inside, due to cold weather. A big thank you to Greg Smith for setting up the dining room, activity tables, coffee, and more.

Becky Praun organized the Living Nativity, Audrey Boland managed the Christmas-card table, Kathy Takemoto facilitated the blanket making and Patty Reed was the swag specialist. Mary Contreras and daughter Elizabeth coordinated the cookie-decorating table. Suzanne and Allen Schmidt were serving up the baked potatoes and white bean chili, and Tonya was the Refill Rover.

After the event is over there is still work to be done, including washing and bagging all the Christmas blankets and inserting a Christmas Card. The blankets were delivered to Deer Park on December 16. The tablecloths were washed, the extras returned. We estimate this event took about a total of 100 hours of labor. Hearing the buzz of conversation, seeing everyone smiling and having a great time is what makes this all worthwhile.

The Fellowship Team thanks you for attending; it was a privilege to serve you.

Audrey Boland, Becky Praun, Kathy Takemoto, Mary Contreras, Patty Reed, and Tonya Church



PCN Kitchen

The kitchen at PCN has undergone a transformation over the past two years. Most of you know last year the old ranges were traded out for new ones that are equipped with flat cooktops and self-cleaning ovens. Soon after followed a leased commercial dishwasher, which is a game-changer for clean-up, especially after Grace Generation. We even purchased new plates, cups, bowls, and serving pieces, all of melamine, which makes it great for the kids each week. We no longer have to worry about breakage if a plate or cup drops on the floor.

In 2025, even more activity in the kitchen happened, including the most major cleaning and reorganizing in the last decade. A refrigerator needed to be purchased for the manse, so after Property looked at the spaces at the church and manse, it was felt the one in the kitchen should be moved to the manse and the church would get a new one. The new one must have a freezer on the bottom, with lots of shelving and drawer space for big events, and a bonus would be an ice maker. The model purchased perfectly fits the space and exceeds the expectations of our most frequent users. Thank you Jay Haney for being available for the delivery and connecting the ice maker. We use the ice every week at Grace Generation. With the addition of the donated coffeemakers for the Buckaroo Breakfast, nearly all of the appliances are now stainless steel and easily cleaned.

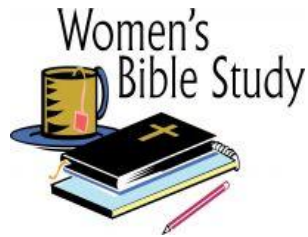
In October, the kitchen was cleaned and organized. Everything in the kitchen was looked at. Chipped dishes were taken out of service. Utensil drawers were cleaned, expanded with bins, and labeled. Anything broken was removed if unable to be repaired. Every cabinet door had the hardware removed and shined. All shelves were wiped off, and new liners were cut to fit. The utensil drawers underwent the largest reorganization and labeling. If you liked having tongs pop out of the drawer at you, this new reorganization will bring much disappointment. For those of you who like to open one drawer and find what you are looking for, the drawers will be fun to open.

The drawers next to the refrigerator were repaired with new gliders. The towels have been folded and placed with the fold side up. This will allow you to dig out towels easier and keep the drawers moving in and out smoothly. Again, if you were getting exercise pushing the towels into the drawer, sorry, the fun is over.

The Safety Committee voted for a kitchen manager, who will be Tonya Church. The goal of this is to make sure someone is keeping their eyes on the kitchen. In 2026, we would like to do some training for those people using the kitchen occasionally. Tonya will clean the ovens as needed, restock supplies, and make sure to keep towels washed. There are cleaning supplies underneath the sink, as are the garbage can liners (particularly the countertop compost ones). It is important that these are emptied regularly.

One fact you might not know is that our dishwasher is eco-friendly. The rinse water from the previous cycle is used as the wash water for next cycle. The dishwasher also has a sanitize cycle, which is the biggest difference between the dishwasher and handwashing. You may think it is easier to hand wash dishes, but the best way is to use the dishwasher. We have directions on the windowsill if you are not familiar. There are two racks and silverware holders, always stored inside the dishwasher. The flat rack works great for bowls and large items, and the pegged rack works best for dishes.

Stay tuned for a bit of information about the kitchen each month. This will be our best way to teach you about the kitchen and inform you of any significant changes. Next month the focus will be cleaning schedules.



Women's Bible Study's is back! We continue to meet via Zoom on Thursdays from 10 to 11:30 a.m. There will be time for conversation, fellowship and prayer. The new Zoom link is below.

We will continue collecting pop-top tabs. We enthusiastically collect these from friends and PCN members all year to donate to the Shriners Hospital for Children in Sacramento, which sells them to a recycling company. The proceeds are used to help parents with expenses. You can drop off yours in the office.

If you have any questions, call Becky Praun at 415.472.1733 or email beckypraun@yahoo.com.

<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!

Happy New Year

A new year is about to unfold
With new opportunities to explore
Doors will open for new experiences,
New adventures with the Lord

Remember not the former things,
The things of this past year,
The Lord will do new things in us,
Much more than we are aware.

-M.S.Lowndes

