



PresPress

May 2026

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

“Celebrating Pride Month in the PC(USA) in the Month of June”

by Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff

“Celebrating Pride Month in the PC(USA) in the Month of June,” Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff

One of the things I love about pastoring in the PC(USA) is that this denomination is open and affirming, the inclusion and embrace of the broader LGBTQIA+ community are not only values we hold but also practices we seek to sustain in the constitutional documents that govern all our churches. In the PC(USA) Book of Order you read these words,

F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity

“As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:27–29).

*The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church’s membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, **gender identity, sexual orientation**, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.*

The full inclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in the PC(USA) has been a lengthy discernment journey, and many of our churches continue to struggle to live out their full inclusion. Inclusion practices are difficult to realize and understand across a wide array of human embodiment questions, which include human sexuality and gender, as well as differences around race and ethnicity, disability, and age.

One of my conversations with your Session search team before I accepted the call as your Interim/Transition Pastor was to ensure that being an open and affirming church was a lived value at the Presbyterian Church of Novato. That does not mean that the value is practiced perfectly or that

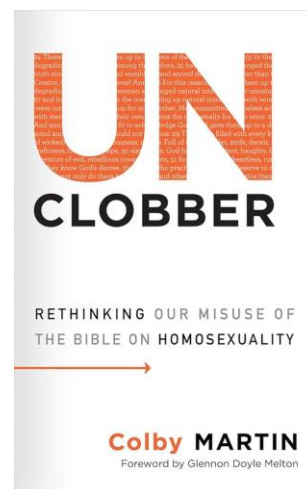
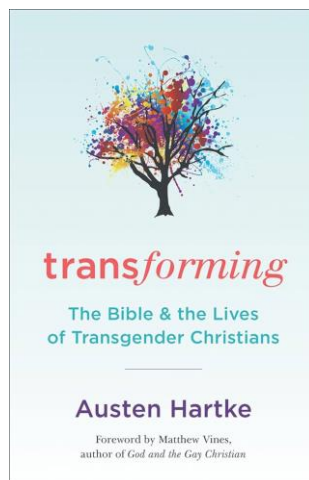
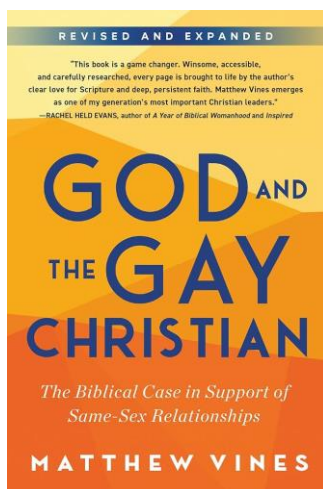
everyone has all the answers to every question, or even shares agreements. Nevertheless, the desire and commitment to seek to realize that value was communicated to me from your Session as something your church family would pursue. I have found that to be the case in various ways here.

As we approach Pride month I wanted to pass along to all you some great resources. There are two large LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups within the PC(USA) I want to draw your attention to (there are others beyond these). The first is the Covenant Network of Presbyterians (<https://www.covnetpres.org>), which offers a wide array of resources to our churches and advocates for generous, just, and truly inclusive practices. The other is the General Assembly Advocacy Committee for LGBTQIA+ Equity (<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/life-witness/ministry-areas/advocacy-support/advocacy-committee-lgbtqia-equity>). The General Assembly committee is another great resource to follow for updates on the status of inclusive conversations in our denomination, and for response statements to national changes that may affect the larger LGBTQIA+ community.

If you would like to explore some helpful literature on LGBTQIA+ inclusion, I want to share three resources I have found helpful in my own spiritual journey. The first is by Matthew Vines called "God and the Gay Christian: The Bible Case in Support of Same-Sex Marriages." Vines leads a national LGBT resourcing group called The Reformation Project (<https://reformationproject.org>), which my family has benefited from by attending its conferences and following its online resources. As a gay Christian who grew up in a non-affirming home, Vines shares many personal stories and helpful thoughts. The second resource is a book by Austen Hartke that explores transgender experiences in relation to the Bible and the church. That book is called "Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians." The last resource suggestion is Colby Martin's widely read book on what are called the 'lobber passages.' The 'lobber passages' are a well-known list of six passages in the bible that have a history of being used to create harm and exclusion of the LGBTQIA+ community in the church. Martin's book is called, "UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality."

We here at the Presbyterian Church of Novato are part of the beautiful body of Christ, which includes a rich diversity of lived experiences, and this requires from each of us a genuine commitment to practicing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our churches in the PC(USA). May God journey with you and your loved ones, my friends, as we celebrate the gift of all our LGBTQIA+ church family members and neighbors in the month of June! I pray these resources will assist you in that celebratory month.

by Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff



The Bible

What is the Bible, and how
should we use the Bible today?
April 19th – May 24th

**How
the Bible
Actually
Works***

*In Which I Explain
How an Ancient,
Ambiguous, and
Diverse Book Leads
Us to Wisdom Rather
Than Answers—and
Why That's Great News

Peter Enns
Author of *The Bible Tells Me So*

Pastor Tony will be offering this class immediately following our Worship services beginning April 19, from 11:30-1:00 in the Christensen room. The textbook "How the Bible Actually Works" is available for purchase in the office for \$16. **Walk-ins welcome**, light lunch will be served.

Click here for updated ['The Bible' Syllabus](#) [Click here to register online](#)



Session

Session Highlights – April 2026

At the April 18, 2026, Session meeting:

- To the congregation from the Moderator and the Session:

The Session would like to thank you for sharing the congregation's thoughts on changes to worship practices. The Session explored a few congregation members' responses to the present practice of Communion and voted to keep the current approach for the Month of May while they continue to discuss different approaches to communion, and whether completing a congregation survey is the best approach or returning to a modified practice of passing trays or intinction. The Session also explored one congregation member's concern about changes to the Order of Worship. They are putting the new Family-Oriented and Modern order-of-worship change on hold while they take another month to discuss the approach. Please provide any feedback you would like to share with them by sending it to the Moderator or Clerk of Session, by noon, Friday May 15, 2026, and it will be included in the May 20th meeting.

Pastor Tony, Moderator of Session, pastortony@pcnovato.org

Kathy Takemoto, Clerk of Session, clerkofsession@pcnovato.org

- Session approved a 2026 revised budget of \$838,191.
- Approved Elder Patty Reed to serve as PCN's second Commissioner to Presbytery, replacing George Pilloton,
- Approved a 6-month lease with Classic Plumbing to park their plumbing supply box truck at the rear of the PCN parking lot for \$250 per month. The parked truck will not interfere with physical education activities for the students of Good Shepherd Lutheran Middle School.
- Community Life Team: Kathy Takemoto reported that PCN will receive a \$5,000 grant from the County of Marin to participate in a Train-the-Trainer class to conduct workshops for PCN and community members to learn about Gun Violence Restraining Orders, as part of the work of the Marin Gun Safety Collaborative.

Kathy Takemoto, Clerk of Session

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.

MISSION May Mission Opportunity!



*Help the Homeless by treating our Canine friends!
Purchase healthy, nationally known Wagster (dog) treats following our
May 17 Worship Service.*

*Homeward Bound will have a patio table set up with various treats.
All funds raised will be matched by PCN Mission.
Show your support by making a purchase!*

Contact Art Plumstead at aplumstead@comcast.net for more information.

HOMeward BOUND WAGSTER SALE!

**LET'S BUY WAGSTER DOG BISCUITS
to benefit Homeward Bound!!**

Mission will MATCH 100% sales proceeds!

Sale table on the patio following Sunday's May 17 Service!



Guatemala Medical Mission Faith In Practice March 6-13, 2026

PCN has supported the Faith in Practice Mission for many years through our budgeting, the annual Alternative Christmas Faire, and providing reading glasses and handmade cases for the mission to provide to clients in Guatemala. The objective of Faith in Practice is to provide medical care to the poor of Guatemala. Each year more than 2,500 volunteers from the US and Guatemala provide healthcare to more than 30,000 through an integrated and coordinated network of care.

This year the Faith In Practice medical team consisting 32 physicians, nurses, pharmacists, physical therapists, translators, pastor, support staff joined an equal number of Guatemalan volunteers traveling to the extreme northern part of Guatemala near the Mexican border — an area that is typically more than a 12-hour drive from Antigua where we held our clinics for a week of medical service to those in need.

The following statistics outline the services provided,

• Total Patients seen	1,239
• Total General patients	479
• Total Pediatric patients	139
• Total Orthopedic patients	259
• Total ENT patients	175
• Total Hearing Aids fitted	72
• Total pairs of Reading Glasses and handmade cases	350
• Total med prescriptions filled	1,175
• Total Wheelchairs given	132
• Total walkers	20
• Total canes	20
• Total cervical precancer treated	5

**365 Patients referred for surgeries to be done by the surgical teams that follow us.*

The following internet link contains the log of activities for the annual trip that was performed in 2026. Please click on the following link to read the log of this incredible journey in God's service to the clients in Guatemala.

[**Click here for the 2026 Faith in Practice Trip Log**](#)

Thank You Guatemala Mission Team!!



"If you can't feed a hundred people, then just feed one"

-Mother Theresa



Reading glasses and handmade cases provided by Presbyterian Church of Novato



CAMP COMPASSION is most grateful for PCN's meal service to feed approximately 30 individuals on the third Wednesday of each month (**May 20**). The location is [Novato Skate Park Picnic Area](#) 1200 Hamilton Parkway, one block from Nave Drive.

You can sign up to help provide food, cook, and serve! [Sign Up](#)
Questions? Contact Hilary Kinney at 415-577-8616 (text) or hilarykinney@yahoo.com





Dear PCN Members and Friends,

Over the past several weeks, our church family has engaged in an important season of reflection, conversation, and discernment. Through our church-wide survey and a series of listening groups, we set out to better understand who we are, how we are growing, and where God may be leading us next.

First and foremost, thank you.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to thoughtfully complete the survey. Out of our 226-member congregation, we received responses from 125 of you – a 55% return, considered by polling organizations to be an outstanding return, indicative of enthusiastic interest and commitment to our dear church home. Thank you, also, to those who showed up, spoke honestly, and listened carefully during our listening group gatherings. Your voices, perspectives, and willingness to engage have been a true gift to our community.

These efforts were never just about gathering information—they were about strengthening connection. They were about creating space to hear one another more deeply and to listen for God's movement among us.

What We Heard

Across both the survey and listening groups, several themes began to emerge. While the full summary will be shared in more detail at a PCN Townhall meeting tentatively planned for early June, we want to share a few key findings from the survey:

The things about PCN that members want to make sure we don't lose as we move into the future:

- Our deep sense of community and belonging
- Strong preaching & Biblical teaching
- Caring ministries and pastoral support
- Worship and music that feel meaningful
- Rich fellowship

Members are clear-eyed about the current state of PCN:

- Nearly 80% acknowledge our slow but progressive decline in membership. Common comments focused on the fact that **“we need to grow again.”**
- An equally robust percentage expressed a willingness to consider necessary changes to increase our appeal. Sentiments were genuine and sober: **“We’re not connecting with younger families as we should.”**
- The biggest fear expressed was not about the need for change, but the possibility that the way in which change is orchestrated could divide the congregation. A common theme was: **“We need change – but not division”.**

The congregation expressed a unified vision of our path forward:

- Focus on strengthening what we already do well – community, care, teaching, belonging
- Remove barriers for new people by clarifying next steps post-worship, engaging hospitality and timely follow-up **“Families need clearer ways to plug in”**
- Invest in expansion of children, youth and family engagement as a central priority **“Youth ministry needs strengthening.”**
- Take measured, well-communicated steps on our change journey to protect unity

Summary:

We love who we are

We see the need to grow.

We are open to changing to grow.

We seek unity on that growth journey.

What Comes Next

This is not the end of the conversation—it is the beginning of a new chapter. Our Mission Study Team is busy reviewing all that has been shared in the survey and listening groups and

working on a full summary of all the findings. These insights will help guide our leadership as we prayerfully consider next steps for our ministries, priorities, and future direction.

We are committed to keeping the congregation informed as plans take shape, and there will be additional opportunities for engagement in the months ahead.

With Gratitude

Once again, thank you for your time, your honesty, and your care for our PCN church community. It is through participation like yours that we continue to grow—not just as an organization, but as a body of believers seeking to serve together with purpose and unity.

We pray that we can move forward with hope, trusting that the same spirit of openness and collaboration that guided this process will continue to guide us in the days ahead.

God's Blessings,

Your Mission Study Team

Karen Marks, Greg Smith, Robert Coleman, Delane Ramser, Becky Moser

EXCITING TIMES AT PCN – A NEW SEASON AHEAD

A message from PCN's Personnel Committee

As many of you know, PCN entered 2026 with a projected operating deficit—meaning our expected income would fall short of our planned expenses. Addressing this in a single year, without significantly impacting staff or ministry, was simply not realistic.

At the same time, two important developments created an unexpected opportunity:

- Tammi's retirement to spend more time with her family
- Our ongoing work to define strategies for growth—especially in reaching and engaging young families

Together, these opened the door for something bigger:

A chance to realign our resources - placing greater emphasis on ministry and people, and less on administration.

Our goal is simple:

to strengthen connection, deepen belonging, and create clear pathways for new individuals and families to find a home at PCN.

New Roles to Support This Vision

We are blessed to have two dedicated leaders stepping into expanded roles to help bring this vision to life.

Sally Carbonaro – Senior Director of Connection & Belonging

Sally will help ensure that every person who walks through our doors is seen, welcomed, and connected. Her focus will include:

- Strengthening daily church operations with the support of trained volunteers
- Sharing PCN's story through our communications (bulletin, email, website, social media)
- Creating clear and consistent guest follow-up so no one “falls through the cracks”
- Leading our growing **Volunteer Corps**, helping more people find meaningful ways to serve
- Coordinating care efforts alongside pastors, deacons, and lay teams

Sydney Fletcher – Director of Family Ministries

Sydney will lead a unified and expanded vision for children, youth, and families. Her focus will include:

- Continued leadership of Children's Ministry (birth–5th grade)
- Expanded oversight of Youth Ministry (middle & high school), creating a seamless pathway for young people
- Partnering with parents as primary faith leaders in the home
- Supporting the technical and media aspects of worship

She will be supported by three part-time team members focused on children, youth, and technical/media ministry—strengthening this vital area of PCN's future.

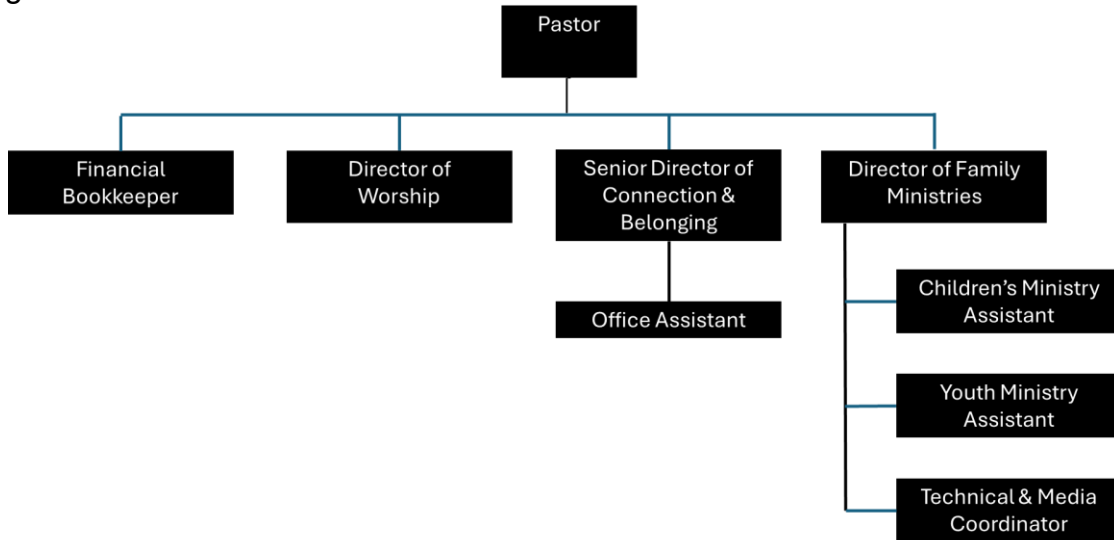
Looking Ahead

This is more than a staffing change—it is a **strategic shift**.

By freeing staff from many administrative tasks and equipping volunteers to step into those roles, we are creating space for greater focus on what matters most:

Individuals, interpersonal connections, and fostering an inclusive and thriving church community for everyone—with particular emphasis on future generations.

These moves are officially effective May 1 – but, as with all organizational changes, there will be some bumps in the road as gaps between old and new positions surface – so patience is called for. In the meantime, please join us in congratulating Sally and Sydney as they step into these exciting new roles and support them when called upon as we step into this exciting new chapter together.





At Rainforest Falls, kids explore the nature of God! Rainforest Falls is filled with awesome Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear, and touch! Hands-on science experiments, team-building games, unforgettable Bible songs, and tasty treats are just a few of the standout activities that help faith flow into real life. Plus, we'll help kids discover how to see evidence of God in everyday life—something we call God Sightings®. Get ready to hear that phrase a lot!

Preschool through 6th graders are invited to participate! Join us for 5 fun days, from June 16th - 20th, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. Registration is \$60 for one child and \$40 for each additional child. Confidential scholarships are available! We do not want anything to prevent you from coming!! Register now at: www.pcnovato.org

Middle and High Schoolers – We have a spot for you as well!! Come join us as a crew leader! We offer community service hours! The crew leader will lead a small crew of five elementary-aged kids. A crew leader is a friend and helper for the kids and station leaders. A one-hour group training is provided. Register now at: www.pcnovato.org

Adults - We need YOU, and there are so many ways to be involved! Even if you are not available on the VBS dates, you can still help with the preparations. We have a place just for you!

🌴 Tree-mendous adventure awaits! 🌴

Your Rainforest Falls Director,
Miss Sydney



THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NOVATO

★★★★2nd Annual★★★★ Buckaroo Breakfast



**July 4th, 7am - 10am
Before the Parade**

Pancakes* | Eggs | Sausage*

***Gluten Free & Vegetarian
Options Available!**

**Suggested Donation:
\$12 Adults & \$5 Children**

**At Redwood Credit Union
Parking Lot, 1010 Grant Avenue**

 www.pcnovato.org



**Net Proceeds Benefit:
OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

Watch for the Sign-Up Genius in our Weekly Email. If you have never participated before, please contact Steve Kinney our big buckaroo at stephen.kinney@yahoo.com

SAVE A LIFE



GIVE BLOOD

Help save a life! Donate Blood!

Go to [Vitalant](https://www.vitalant.org) and enter our zip code 94947 to search for PCN.
Register today!

Sunday June 7 is the Deacons Semi Annual Blood Drive from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. Tell your family, friends and neighbors. There is a link on our website, or you can go to www.vitalant.org to register. Questions? Contact Becky Praun.



Holy Week was very special at PCN in 2026. From the entertaining children's Palm Sunday program followed by the amazing brunch, to the somber Good Friday Tenebrae service, to the celebratory Easter worship, members and guests were treated to a beautiful sanctuary, amazing music, delicious food and inspiring sermons. Many thanks to everyone who contributed to this amazing week.

Below are just a few pictures that commemorate the variety of events during Holy Week.







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!!

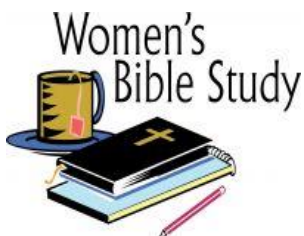
Session 1 June 22nd - 27th	Session 2 June 29th - July 4th	Session 3 July 6th - 11th	Session 4 July 14th - 17th
<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>WOODS TO WAVES (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>HEARTWOOD CIT PROGRAM (AGES 15-17)</p>	<p>CAMP HEARTWOOD (AGES 7-16)</p> <p>HEARTWOOD 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.

The office will be closed on Tuesday, April 28- Monday, May 4.

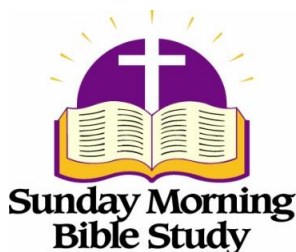
Please contact the office phone or email for urgent needs. 415.897.6152 pcnadmin@pcnovato.org.



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!