

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

Return Service Requested

PresPress



November 2 – In Memoriam video
November 11 – Veterans Day; office closed
November 16 – Town Hall
November 23 – Hanging of the Greens

November 27 – Thanksgiving; office closed



PResPRes

November 2025

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

**The Ever-Changing Story of Christian Worship
Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff**

Pastor Tony's Background in Liturgical Studies

My first doctorate, which I completed at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, explored how different Christian approaches to worship shaped and informed the mission priorities and spiritual formation practices of local churches. For those who have completed doctorates in religious and/or theological studies, you know the standard practice at the end is to defend a written thesis/dissertation/final project. That defense involves having two experts in the area of your research read your thesis and call you into an oral defense of the thesis that lasts several hours. You cannot have any notes available other than your written thesis. One of those thesis examiners is from the university where you completed your research; this person is called your “internal reader,” and the other is from an outside university; this person is called your “external reader.”

My internal reader was Dr. Sue A. Rozeboom, Professor of Liturgical Theology at Western. Dr. Rozeboom has a PhD from the University of Notre Dame and completed her doctorate under the late, great Nathan D. Mitchell, arguably one of, if not the most, formative liturgical theologians in America in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. My external reader was Dr. Paul Weston, lecturer at Ridley Hall and the University of Cambridge. I am deeply grateful to have such skilled and influential readers; it was not an easy defense of my thesis. The title of my thesis was “Worship As Public Truth: Toward a Liturgical-Missional Ecclesiology.” I would go on to present research from that doctoral thesis at Durham University, a school regularly ranked as the world's top theological university. At Durham, I presented a paper at their annual international conference dedicated to Ecclesiology & Ethnography. The research from that degree would also, in time, be published in peer-reviewed academic journals.

As a pastor, I have also spent a great deal of time reflecting on the different ways local faith communities practice worship over my 27 years of ministry across the U.S.A. Those faith communities included churches with three distinct approaches to worship in two venues, with weekly attendance of more than 1,100, with multiple full-time directors of worship and rotating teams of paid musicians. One of the congregations where I served as a youth pastor intern had more than 2,000 in weekly worship, with 300-500 in weekly middle school and high school worship gatherings.

One thing I have discovered that is consistent across worship approaches is that the story of Christian worship is ever-changing. It is a misconception to suggest that traditional worship

approaches are fixed and never undergo major innovations, just as it is incorrect to suggest that contemporary worship approaches have no history that shapes and affects their practices.

The Ever-Changing World of Traditional Worship

For those who come from a traditional worship background, you may not realize that you would be considered “innovators and disruptors” within the history of traditional worship in America. What do I mean by that?

Traditional worship approaches began as an “exclusive psalmody” musical tradition. The only songs in worship services were songs taken directly from the biblical book of Psalms. There are still traditional churches today, including Presbyterian denominations in Scotland, that practice exclusive psalmody. In America, early Presbyterians left the form of the songs in service up to individual congregations to decide. Some congregations chose to sing only biblical Psalms, while others included contemporary hymns written during the period.

Not only was the choice of songs an issue of controversy for the early traditional worship movement, but the choice to include musical instruments was considered an innovation. In early American history, Presbyterians typically sang songs in a “metered rhythm” without instruments. Instruments were a luxury that most colonists could not presume to have. A good example of this was a popular worship song in use in the period called *The Psalms of David*.

As hymns became more common and the presence of instruments increased, the modern practice of hymnals picked up speed. The first Presbyterian hymnal used in America was “*Psalms and Hymns*,” adopted in 1831. Its creation was sanctioned in 1819 and took 12 years to be approved. The PC(USA), our denomination, has had three main hymnals over the years: *The Worshipbook: Services and Hymns* (1972), *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990), and the present one in use, *Glory to God: The Presbyterian Hymnal* (2013).

One of the most widely used instruments in traditional worship, the organ, was a deeply controversial innovation when it first came into use. Many called the pipe organ a “pagan instrument” because of its use in secular events. In America, the discussion of the pipe organ in worship played out along national political divides. Many liberals in the North embraced the organ as a helpful and spirited innovation; just as many conservatives in the South opposed it, arguing that there was “no biblical reference to an organ used for worship.” This was a common biblical literalist critique of many Southern churches regarding the inclusion of the pipe organ in worship services. So intense were the worship wars over the pipe organ that, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, entire denominations were, in part, formed by their responses to its use in public worship. The Disciples of Christ (pro-organ) and the Churches of Christ (anti-organ) are examples of how those strongly felt worship differences divided churches (particularly in 1906).

The next time those of you from the traditional worship approach stop and say to yourself, “Why can’t it be like it used to be?” please keep this history in mind. You, my traditional worship friends, are innovators within your own musical tradition. You use non-biblical hymns, instruments, and, gasp, even a pipe organ. Wow, how contemporary of you!

The Ever-Changing World of Contemporary Worship

What about those who come from a contemporary worship approach? Are people who embrace contemporary worship just innovators, non-traditionalists, people with no attachments to earlier forms of worship, who only value “music that is radio-station current?” Let’s talk about that.

Contemporary worship, as an approach or distinct style of worship, began in the 1960s as part of the Jesus Movement, a cultural revolution. At that time, the innovation involved taking choruses from hymns and resetting them to more modern instrumentations.

By the 1980s and 1990s a distinct Christian music industry with expansive musical genres was created. Christian music was no longer split into two genres, church hymns and gospel music; now it included all the music genres available on the radio. Contemporary worship music drew on several musical genres, mostly rock and alternative, and its songs circulated widely across the country as a Top 100 playlist of sorts. During the 1980s, the ‘Worship Leader’ model emerged and became an anchored practice in most churches by the 1990s. Essentially, one to two key vocalists led the songs with support vocalists without full choirs. This became widely used for contemporary worship approaches.

By the early 2000s, most of the music labels that drove contemporary worship music were no longer Christian-owned companies. Mainstream music labels enveloped the Christian music industry. As online ‘streaming music’ emerged, the entire music industry, including Christian music, got upended, and larger conglomerates acquired independent labels. The National Top 100 Contemporary Christian Worship Songs approach expanded to include regional contributions by local worship artists. Those who had become accustomed to the same contemporary worship songs in churches across the country discovered that, as they traveled, the songs in worship services in other places were by artists they were unfamiliar with. During this period, advances in media technology for lighting and sound arrays, guided by new worship media software, also brought about changes. Lastly, shifts in contemporary approaches were beginning to be driven by innovations in large youth ministries that outpaced those in adult worship services.

This shift toward regional artists who have grown through online followership has exploded since the mid-2010s. For coffee fans, I call this the micro-roasting of Contemporary Christian worship. We no longer live in the age of national music companies – the ‘Starbucks’ approach to contemporary worship songs. Now, it’s regional artists driving songs in local church worship services. No longer are major music companies able to drive what contemporary worship songs are used across the country; now it is more viral, more regionally blended, and more distinct and artisan in character.

On the West Coast, we have movements like the Bethel and Jesus Culture movements, which are artist collectives (involving several gifted singer-songwriters who collaborate). In the Midwest and Northeast, we have collectives like The Porters Gate. You even have larger musical institutes at seminaries and universities that are encouraging this kind of creative experimentation, such as the *Calvin Institute of Christian Worship* and the *Institute for Biblical Worship*. Having a unifying contemporary worship songbook widely embraced by those who perform contemporary worship has become more difficult, as a variety of factors inform song and arrangement choices.

What does this mean for those who would call their approach contemporary worship? Well, if you find yourself wanting to listen to songs from Hillsong, Chris Tomlin, Matt Redman, and songs from companies like Maranatha! Music or older top 100 CCM (Contemporary Christian Music) choices, like Vertical Music, your contemporary song selection may be 20-30 years old. Suppose Jesus Culture, The Porters Gate, Ghost Ship, The Modern Post, Ascend the Hill, John Mark McMillan, Citizens, Kim Walker-Smith, Future of Forestry, The City Harmonic, The Digital Age, Silver Pages, Bethel Music all sound foreign to you. In that case, that may mean you have missed the last 15 years of contemporary worship music.

Which is not even to name genres that defy the simple categories of traditional vs. contemporary. For example, gospel music, spirituals, world music, and more.

Takeaways for PCN's Approach to Wholistic/Blended Worship

Those who love traditional worship approaches at PCN may value a form of traditional worship that is quite innovative within that approach's history. Those who love contemporary worship approaches at PCN may value songs and approaches from the 1990s and early 2000s, but that is not reflective of current approaches.

What that means, my friends, is let's hold our values about approaches to worship with more humility. Let's also be curious about what the Spirit of God is doing anew in our times.

There is a new worship approach in America right now that is akin, in some ways, to what happened in the 1960s with the first emergence of contemporary worship, and in the late 18th- and early 19th-century with shifts in traditional worship toward instruments contemporary at the time. This new worship approach is called "The New Hymn Movement."

Traditional hymns are being set to contemporary instrumentation and vocal arrangements, often by worship collectives in which several gifted singer-songwriters collaborate, sharing gifts and dreaming about how to draw together all the disparate approaches to worship. Some current examples of this movement include The Porters Gate, Page CXVI, The Brilliance, Common Hymnal, All Sons & Daughters, Holy City Hymns, Thief to King, and The Modern Post.

On Sunday mornings, this ever-changing world of worship approaches is being sampled, engaged with, and explored. If you have Christian worship artists or hymnals that you want PCN to explore, please don't assume we can intuit your specific values and interests. Instead, reach out to Art or Pastor Tony and share those thoughts with them.

PCN is part of the great, ever-changing story of Christian worship! You, my friends, are a vital part of that beautiful and creative journey!



Session

Session Highlights – October 2025

At the October 15, 2025 Stated Session meeting:

- Session discussed how each committee/team can include an Elder as a guest member, active member, or Elder representative. Session discussed combining committees/teams with similar, overlapping objectives.
- Session approved up to \$15,000 to develop a “guest-welcoming” program to include a new logo, letterhead, worship bulletin cover and accompanying templates for use in social media postings. The Communication Team will work in conjunction with Pastor Tony on this project.
- The Nominating Committee is beginning their work to identify candidates for the Mission Study Team and Pastor Nominating Committee. The Mission Study team requires Session approval; the Pastor Nominating Committee requires congregational approval.
- The Finance Committee reminds committees/teams to watch their expenses in order to meet their budgets.
- Session approved the staff holiday calendar for 2026.
- Presbytery Commissioner George Pilloton reported that PC(USA) Missionary Cathy Chang publicly thanked the Presbyterian Church of Novato and Mission Team member Bill Cameron for their on-going support of worldwide missionaries at the October 11, 2025 Presbytery meeting.

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.

Camp Compassion

Members of PCN continue to serve food to the unhoused children and adults at Camp Compassion. Volunteers do the meal planning, shopping, preparing and cooking, then serve the grateful recipients. This project continues on the third Wednesday of each month. If you are interested in participating, please contact Hilary Kinney at hilarykinney@yahoo.com for more information.



2025 Alternative Christmas Faire



There are many organizations that are in need of help, and we know the congregation has stepped up to help out for many years to support the organizations sponsored by PCN. The Mission Team is organizing the annual "Alternative Christmas Faire" event. This "in-person" event will follow the church service on December 7. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#) to access the Alternative Christmas Faire detailed document. This document is also available in hard-copy form in the church office.

For those who are unable to attend the 'in-person' event, donations to the organizations sponsored in the event can be mailed to the church by December 15 using the order form on the following page. The following organizations are included in the Alternative Christmas Faire.

Homeward Bound

NOAH (Neighbors Organized Against Hunger)

Heifer

Faith in Practice

Presbyterian Giving

Boy Scout Troop 200

Hope Opens Doors

Those who wish to participate in this giving opportunity can use the instructions in this document to donate to any of the organizations listed above. Participants can also purchase items from the organizations and/or simply donate to the organizations as they choose to do so. Alternatively, participants can simply provide a single donation to be divided across all the organizations.

Here is how it works.

- 1) **Print** this document. Copies are available in the church office.
- 2) On the next page, you will find a list of the organizations that we are sponsoring. Use this page to decide which organizations you wish to donate to and to enter the amounts.
- 3) **Enter** an amount you wish to donate for each organization on the donation form.
- 4) **Add** all the donations together and put the total on the 'total' line at the bottom of the page.
- 5) **Cash, credit cards, or checks will be accepted for your donation. If you write a check, write** 'Alternative Christmas Faire' in the memo line.
- 6) **If you donate before the 'in-person' event, send** the donations page and a check to the following address:

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



2025 Alternative Christmas Faire Donation Form



Your Name:

Organization	Donation Amount
Homeward Bound	_____
NOAH (Neighbors Organized Against Hunger)	_____
Heifer Project	_____
Faith in Practice	_____
Presbyterian Giving	_____
Boy Scout Troop 200	_____
Hope Opens Doors	_____
General Donation	_____
Total Donations	_____

You can also mail in the check to the following address if you wish to donate before the event.

Presbyterian Church of Novato
710 Wilson Avenue
Novato, CA 94947

COMMISSIONING CEREMONY

Our very own Sally Carbonaro was commissioned as a Commissioned Ruling Elder on Sunday, September 28. It was a beautiful service and the culmination of hours of work and study by Sally.



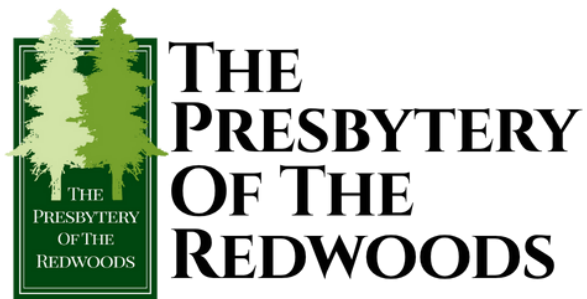
The Commission

From left to right: Rev. Dr. Tony Stiff; Rev. Ariel Mink; CRE Sally Swan; CRE Sally Carbonaro; CRE Paul Slaikeu; Ruling Elder Jeannette Anglin, Vice Moderator, Presbytery of the Redwoods; Rev. Eric Beene, General Presbyter, Presbytery of the Redwoods; Ruling Elder Kathy Takemoto; and Honorably Retired Rev. Dr. Kent Webber



A Special Thank You

I am deeply overwhelmed with gratitude for everyone at PCN. Your love, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout my journey – culminating in this Commissioning Service – have meant more than words can express. This church is not just a place; it's a community filled with extraordinarily faithful people. Thank you for walking alongside me, lifting me up, and making this moment so profoundly special. I am truly blessed to walk this path with you. May we continue to serve Him together with joy and purpose.



Report: Presbytery Meeting
October 11, 2025

The Presbytery meeting was held in-person on Saturday, October 11, 2025 at First Presbyterian Church of San Rafael. Pastor Tony Stiff, Kathy Takemoto, George Pilloton, and Sally Carbonaro attended the meeting of about 80 people. The meeting handled various routine business matters, received routine reports, and installed a new Presbytery Moderator and Vice Moderators.

Worship included five brief presentations from various groups, including Zephyr Point Conference Center, Westminster Woods Conference Center, Board of Pensions, and Presbyterian Foundation. Of particular note to PCN, a presentation was also offered by Cathy Chang, representing PC(USA) Global Partnerships and who now lives in Sacramento; she specifically thanked PCN, and Bill Cameron, our liaison from Mission, for our “generous support” over the years.

The General Assembly-proposed “Overture” regarding Israel was presented for vote at the meeting, after the “First Reading” at Presbytery in July 2025. (An Overture is a resolution proposed to General Assembly for ratification.) The Overture, titled: *Recognition that Israel has Violated the International Law Prohibiting Genocide*, was voted and approved. This overture is presented by First Presbyterian Church San Anselmo.

Most exciting to PCN was the election of Kathy Takemoto to be *the* Ruling Elder Commissioner representing Redwoods Presbytery at the General Assembly meetings in Milwaukee in June 2026. Congratulations, Kathy! Mary Beene was elected the Teaching Elder Commissioner.

Presbytery also approved an alternate senior ordination examination proposal from the Committee for Pastoral Ministry to allow process accommodations for disabilities, specifically for a Ministry of the Word and Sacrament Candidate.

The meeting also featured the 2025 Youth Triennium Video, created by Pastor Adam Smith, and an update from Hunger Action.

George Pilloton, Commissioner



PCN will honor our veterans on Sunday, November 9 at coffee hour. Below is a list of PCN veterans. If you are a veteran and would like to be added to our list, please contact Kathy Takemoto at (847) 274-8276.
 Of note: member Ramona Chipman's family has had at least one family member in the US Army since the first relative served with George Washington!
 Thank you, veterans!

Ray	Carlson	Army
Ramona	Chipman	Army
Robert	Douglass	Army Air Corps, Air Force
Alan	Dunham	Naval Reserve
Jim	Emrich	Coast Guard
Donald	Erba	National Guard
Carl	Fehring	Army Air Corps
Garrick	Fong	Army
Jon	Hanlein	Navy
Fred	King	Army
John	Marks	Marine Corps
Janet	Morales	Air Force
Michael	Moser	Coast Guard
Gail	Penfield	Army
Arthur	Plumstead	US Public Health Service
Donald	Powell	Air Force
Mike	Robinson	Air Force
Doug	Saysette	Navy
Ray	Shanahan	Army
Greg	Smith	Air Force
Bruce	Stahley	Army
Donald	Taylor	Naval Reserve, Army
Tom	Telfer	Army
Bill	Walker	Coast Guard
Bill	Wolff	Air Force
Stan	Wood	Air Force



Hanging of the Greens!

Please join us Sunday, November 23 after worship for the annual Hanging of the Greens! We'll put up the Christmas tree, get the Advent wreath out, and beautify the sanctuary. Questions? Contact Bill Bradfield at 415.408.3427. As you can see from the above picture, last year's group had a great time!



The Property Team would like to thank Scout Troop 200 for coming out Saturday, October 11. After a brief light breakfast the team went right to work for three hours painting the parking lot curbs. They were also able to update the handicapped parking places with stenciling of the ADA signage and painting the tire stops.

This is a great start to getting our parking lot ready and safe for the next phase. Thanks to Jackie Dold, adult leader and the "crew:" Scouts Joel Butcher, Lucas Dold, Nikolai Fedoroff, Tristan Pressman, Ridden Thabkey, Jackie herself in all her bling, and Brad Praun.

Kudos to our Scouts. Please thank them when you see them at church.

With gratitude,
Becky Praun/Property Curb Appeal



SUPPER CLUB ALERT

Groups will be formed in the next few weeks for the coming year

New members: If you haven't participated in this great fellowship program, you will find that Supper Club will give you the opportunity to get to know members of the church family. Supper Club groups consist of three or four couples or singles who meet three or four times during the year, beginning in November. A substitute couple will join the group when a fourth couple is needed. The dinner, brunch or lunch dates are scheduled by the individual groups. Each member hosts a meal and provides the main dish while the other members provide an appetizer, salad and dessert. Substitutes provide food but are not required to host.

Supper Club regulars: Please confirm that you wish to remain active, be placed on the sub list, or do not want to participate this year. However, if we do not hear from you and you were in a group last year, we will assign you to a new group. There will be a table at the Light Fest on October 26 where you can learn more about Supper Club groups and sign up.

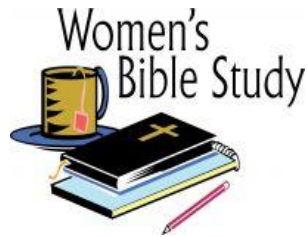
If you miss this opportunity, you can call E.B. Hanlein at (415) 225-6496.



It's not too late to participate in the Saturday morning Great Courses video lecture and discussion group for its current offering: "How the Crusades Changed History." The group meets via Zoom on Saturdays from 10:30 a.m. to about 12:30 p.m. The format is to watch two Great Courses lectures followed by a discussion of the lectures and the relevance of the material presented to current events, church leadership, and Christian ethics.

The course has 24 half-hour lectures covering political, military, church leadership, and religious aspects of the medieval Crusades to the Holy Land and within Europe.

The course began August 23 and continues through November 8. Participants receive a pdf course guide that summarizes all lectures as well as access to the Great Courses video streaming platform to view prior lectures of particular interest, so it is possible to catch up with the group. If interested in participating, please email Walt Campbell at walterleecampbell@gmail.com or call him at 415.497.5157 with any questions.



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!