



Weekly Newsletter

Trinity Presbyterian Church

Santa Cruz

September 10, 2026

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Come worship with us this Sunday at 10:30 am!
September 13, 2026 ~ The Rev. Diane Ford



This weekend, we have two worship services. Thank you to our deacons and the many others who are preparing for the memorial service of Ed Sams on Saturday. September also brings the choir back to worship on Sunday mornings, and they will be singing at the memorial as well. We will be livestreaming the service, so please visit our website to join us online.

Sermon Teaser: The disciples want to know exactly how many times they need to forgive someone and still be on God's good side. So, Jesus tells a parable that makes it clear that no amount of counting can compare to the importance of forgiveness!

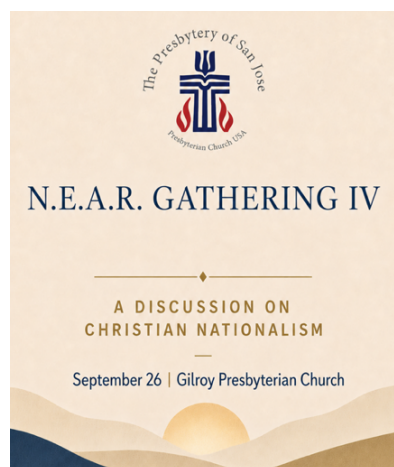
Scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

The following is an article by Mike Ferguson, the same man who will be presenting for us at Presbytery's NEAR Gathering in Gilroy. I hope you find it helpful as you learn more about the term "Christian Nationalism" – even that term is problematic! -- Pastor Diane

Preaching in the midst of Christian nationalism

Or, as Dr. Heath Carter of Princeton Seminary calls it, 'hardline Christian extremism'

September 3, 2026, Mike Ferguson, Presbyterian News Service



LOUISVILLE — [Dr. Heath Carter](#) sees “significant dangers” in the present time. “How we in our congregations navigate these times is critical,” he told more than 40 preachers tuned in Wednesday to the [Synod of the Covenant](#)’s monthly preaching webinar hosted by Synod Executive the Rev. Dr. Chip Hardwick.

Dr. Heath Carter, associate professor of American Christianity at [Princeton Theological Seminary](#), called his 77-minute talk “Preaching in the Midst of Christian Nationalism.” He shared part of his own faith journey, which included a time when he considered himself a

Christian nationalist until as a freshman at Georgetown University his roommate — a lifelong Catholic and the son of a Democratic congressman — together with thoughtful Jesuit clerics on the faculty, helped Carter launch a highly productive career as an American religious historian.

Carter calls the term Christian nationalism “not super helpful” because it can lump together people who believe a Christian flag belongs in the church sanctuary with those who attacked the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. “I wish we could find other ways to talk about the threats and dangers we face,” Carter said. “We are a hyper-polarized society, and the use of this term is understood to be pejorative. But some take it as a badge of honor. My question for all of us is whether this way of talking about the dangers we face is helping us move forward toward a more flourishing society.”

While “Christian nationalism” is a relatively new term, “the sense of deep entwinement between Protestant faith and American nationalism goes back 250 years,” Carter said.

He offered three takes on the history of Christian America. Take 1, from the nation’s founding to early in the 20th century, saw revivals sweeping the country, although many communities lacked churches and ministers. “Folks weren’t necessarily devout,” Carter said, but reformers believed “we could build the kingdom of God on Earth.”

The abolitionist Frederick Douglass certainly saw the need. “For between the Christianity of this land and the Christianity of Christ,” Douglass said, “I recognize the widest possible difference.”

Take 2 is the emergence of mainline Protestantism. By 1908, the Federal Council of Churches, the precursor of the [National Council of Churches](#), “took on all kinds of projects,” Carter said. “Part of what happens is that through ingenuity and determination,” Black leaders in the FCC “get the organization in less than 40 years to condemn Jim Crow.” FCC leaders “were deeply influential” in passing New Deal legislation and fighting for civil rights. “It was a way to Christianize the social order,” he said. Take 3 is the rise of the religious right, the backlash to civil rights that ran through white supremacist politics and anti-New Deal politics.

For Carter, the trouble ahead comes from “the tendency to identify the gospel with white supremacy, Christian supremacy, animosity toward ‘the stranger,’ militant masculinity, U.S. exceptionalism and profound inequality.” “Whether or not ‘Christian nationalism’ is the right term to use, there is no doubt we encounter these,” he said. The question becomes “how to engage the world when these connections are being made?” Carter said he prefers using a term like “hardline Christian extremism” to Christian nationalism. “Not everyone who wants a more restrictive immigration policy than I do is a hardline Christian extremist,” he said. “We have a Christian imperative to protect the vulnerable and to speak the truth,” he said. “I can’t believe anyone is beyond redemption. We hold out hope,” which he said is “a way Christians can be distinctive at this time.”

Throughout his talk, Carter encouraged continued engagement with siblings in the faith with whom we disagree. “When people change their minds, it’s not because they were harangued,” he noted. “It’s because someone loves them and shows them generosity, curiosity and respect.” “I think our faith calls us into conversation with these folks,” he said. “We will be surprised by what the Spirit will do.”

Deadline to register for NEAR is September 12.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdByKrork93g3kRmCfIC3GDifSSstmahOekVBqC0teH2teA3g/viewform>



The Deacons are honored to host coffee and cookies at the reception for the memorial service of Ed Sams on September 12, and are **asking for your assistance in providing cookies**. If you could drop your cookies or bars, in the kitchen, on your way to the service, the deacons will make sure they are plated for the reception. The deacons appreciate your support, thank you!

Book Club meets the third Monday of each month. On September 21, we will discuss "How to Read a Book" by Monica Wood.

Happy Hour will take place Thursday, September 17, from 4-6pm at the Back 9 in Pasatiempo. Come for fellowship, deepen friendships, and bring someone new.

COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY. **Save Our Shores** is sponsoring a county-wide beach cleanup on Saturday, September 19, from 9am-12pm. Save Our Shores is a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the beaches, ocean, and wildlife of Monterey Bay. This event is part of the larger California Coastal Cleanup Day, which is the state's largest annual volunteer cleanup. In 2024, the state-wide event collected 332,861 pounds of trash! I'll be volunteering at New Brighton Beach, I would love to see friends of Trinity PC out there. You can pick from one of 50 sites that day. Register at: [Annual Coastal Cleanup Day](#)
Submitted by Deb O'Connell, deb_oconnell@hotmail.com

To schedule a visit with Pastor Diane please email her directly at TrinitySCPastorDiane@gmail.com, or bring your calendar on Sunday morning and she will set a time with you.

Presbytery Unity Candle:

This week we pray for First Presbyterian Church, Palo Alto, and the Rev. Tom Harris.



September 13 Linda Weaver
September 27 Paul Sams
Bob Scott



September 3 Richard & Roberta Zakarian

Librarian's Corner

Our Library is open Thursdays 10 – noon.

Larry the Librarian will post updates to the Library Website at <https://www.trinitylibrary.org/>

One Night Only! **Community Revels: *La Bohème***

The Santa Cruz Opera Project presents Puccini's beloved *La Bohème* in a fresh, accessible production that brings the timeless story of love, friendship, and dreams to present-day Santa Cruz. This special remount features an expanded chorus, including the **Cabrillo Youth Chorus**, and takes place outdoors at the beautiful Audrey Stanley Grove. Tickets available at:

<https://santacruzshakespeare.my.salesforce-sites.com/ticket/#/events/a0Scx000000oF2HEAU>



Opportunities to Serve

Quilt Much? Sweet Pea is the place to be! Interested in learning to quilt or looking to get back into it? Grab a sewing machine and join the Sweet Pea team! They meet in the Youth Room (enter door on Melrose Ave) from 9:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. every other Saturday. Their finished creations are donated to hospitals and shelters. Contact janedevette@aol.com for more information.

AFC Dinners, Every 2nd & 3rd Wednesday. Looking to contribute to your community through cooking or small donations? Contact Debbie Bates at debates44@aol.com to see what can be provided. The Association of Faith Communities (AFC) is a coalition of congregations serving Santa Cruz County.

Urban Works. Urban Works embraces art and recreation to break through faith, social, and economic barriers, to create community for adults with disabilities and their support networks. Watch the bulletin board outside the church office for updates, and see Diane if you are interested in volunteering.

Regularly Occurring Events at Trinity

Sundays at Trinity

- ❖ Choir rehearsal: 9-10:15 am through the end of June, then off until after Labor Day.
- ❖ Morning Lectionary Discussion: 9:00 am, Fireside Room
- ❖ Sunday Worship: 10:30 am in the Sanctuary & streaming live on YouTube and FB.
- ❖ Coffee Hour: Immediately following our Sunday service in the Fellowship Hall.
- ❖ Trinity Library is open during coffee hour.
- ❖ Nooners Class: 12:00 pm in the Fireside Room and on Zoom.
- ❖ Board of Deacons: 3rd Sundays (none in July), 12:00 pm, Youth Room

Mondays at Trinity

- ❖ Book Club: (Every 3rd Monday) 10:00 am-11:00 am, Fireside Room
- ❖ Monday Night Lectionary Study: (weekly) at 4:30 in the Fireside Room

Tuesdays at Trinity

- ❖ Administration Committee: (1st Tuesday, in "odd" months), 4:30 pm, Fireside Room
- ❖ Worship and Christian Education (WCE): 1st Tuesdays at 10:30 am, Fireside room.
- ❖ Session: 2nd Tuesdays, at 4:30 pm in the Fireside Room

Wednesdays at Trinity

- ❖ Association of Faith Communities (AFC) Board Mtg.: 11:00 am-1:00 pm, Fireside.

- ❖ Faith Community Shelter: 4pm - Overnight, Fellowship Hall.
- ❖ Shower the People: 3:00 pm-6:00 pm, Parking Lot.
- ❖ Urban Works Board Mtg.: 1st Wednesdays, 6:00 - 7:00 pm, Fireside Room.

Thursdays at Trinity

- ❖ Library Corner: 10:00 am -12:00 pm, socialize in the library.
- ❖ Trinity Happy Hour: Every Third Thursday from 4-6. Place to be determined.

Saturdays at Trinity

- ❖ Sweet Pea Quilting: Every other Saturday from 9:30 am – 3:45 pm, Youth Room.