

Meet the Presbytery Staff: Melinda Forbes

Last week at our monthly presbytery staff meeting, the Rev. Wendy Tajima had a great suggestion of having us introduce ourselves through the Monday Morning Updates. I elected to start the ball rolling this week.

Hi everyone, my name is Melinda Forbes. I am married to Sonnie Swenston, who serves on the Commission on Ministry. We have been together for 32 years, and we live in Covina.

I joined the presbytery staff in January as a part-time Presbytery Property Manager for the Temple City property (9723 Garibaldi Avenue), home of the presbytery office, two churches, and a preschool. I find it rewarding to be working with all our shared ministry partners. We meet once a month over Zoom to discuss property issues. I have had to take care of a bee infestation, had major tree work completed, and work with our vendors and maintenance personnel. I have learned to fill out LA County Assessor forms to file for tax exemptions. I also work with our partners in taking care of the monthly calendar for all the school, worship, and presbytery activities that take place on this busy property!

For many of you, I was known as a Ruling Elder and Treasurer for the First Presbyterian Church of Baldwin Park. We sadly closed our church in 2018 for financial reasons and a renter issue. Since then, I have chaired the Administrative Commission for the property. We formed a joint venture with San Gabriel Valley Habitat for Humanity to build 15 affordable housing units on the south section of the property. A portion of the north part of the property will stay with the presbytery. SGV Habitat for Humanity will build a house and ADU (accessory dwelling unit) for the presbytery's uses. The process has been grinding along but we are seeing true light at the end of this arduous journey. Construction on the units is expected to start this fall! Wendy Gist, our AC Liaison, and I have been involved in Zoom meetings twice a month with our Habitat team. This keeps us on track. Wendy's leadership and property knowledge have been a tremendous asset! I will be attending a meeting of the Baldwin Park City Council on Wednesday, August 7, representing the presbytery, where our project will be presented by Bryan Wong, CEO of SGV Habitat for Humanity. Anyone is welcome to join the meeting! This dream of affordable housing will be an incredible legacy for our church which had championed justice causes since 1949.

I was excited to serve as a first time Commissioner to this year's General Assembly in Salt Lake City as our presbytery's Ruling Elder alongside Teaching Elder Deidra Goulding. Deidra and I will be sharing our GA experiences at the presbytery meeting to be held on Zoom on Tuesday, September 17.

Praying for peace all over the world,
Melinda