



Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church

A United Church of Christ

Sr. Pastor Rev. Mitchell Young

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“...an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, ‘Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you...’”

Matthew 2:13

Moving into the New Year

As we gather in the gentle glow of Advent's light and look toward the promise of the New Year, I write to you with a heart full of both gratitude and a quiet sense of reflection. This Christmas marks my final year with you before I step into retirement, a transition that brings a flood of memories of our shared journey of faith.

In this time of year, our lectionary guides us to a profound, yet often overlooked, part of the Nativity story: the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt, as recorded in Matthew 2:13-23. It is a narrative that speaks not merely of a peaceful birth in a manger, but of the stark realities of fear, displacement, and divine providence in the face of human cruelty.

We often imagine the Christmas story as a static, serene painting. Yet, Matthew's account reminds us it was one of constant motion and peril. An angel appears to Joseph in a dream, urging him to flee the murderous intentions of King Herod. Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus become refugees, seeking safety in a foreign land. They were the original displaced family, a powerful testament to the vulnerability of even the Son of God.

This story of flight resonates deeply in our world today, where countless

families flee persecution, war, and hardship, seeking refuge and hope. The Holy Family's journey challenges us to see the face of Christ in the eyes of the stranger, the immigrant, and the asylum seeker. Their vulnerability calls us to a ministry of hospitality and compassion, to be the welcoming presence that the innkeeper in Bethlehem could not initially be.

As I reflect on our years together, I see the ways we have striven to embody this compassion. We have been a community that opens its doors, our hearts, and our resources to those in need. We have journeyed through joys and sorrows, through seasons of plenty and times of trial. Through it all, the steadfast love of God has been our guiding star.

Matthew's account concludes with the family's eventual return to Nazareth, fulfilling the prophecy, "Out of Egypt I called my son." It is a reminder that the trials and exiles we face are not the final word. The arc of the story bends towards homecoming and restoration. There is always the promise of a return to peace, a new beginning guided by God's hand.

As I prepare to conclude my active ministry among you, my prayer for you is that you continue to embrace the dynamism of the Christian life. Like the Holy Family, be ready to move when God calls, to embrace change, and to find the divine presence even in the most unexpected and challenging circumstances.

This Christmas, let us celebrate the

Incarnation not just as a historical event, but as a living truth—that God is with us, in our joys and in our flights, in our stability and in our transitions.

May the peace of the Christ Child be with you all now and in the New Year. I look forward to this final year of serving alongside you with gratitude.

In God's Grace,

Pastor Mitchell

Worship Schedule

January 4

Holy Communion

Mochitsuki

“The Remnant”

Jeremiah 31:7-14

January 11

Installation of New Church

Officers & Board

“Stretched Them Out”

Isaiah 42:1-9

January 18

“Salvation May Reach”

Isaiah 49:1-7

January 25

Annual Congregational
Meeting

“Make Glorious the Way”

Isaiah 9:1-4

A Message from our Moderator...
Lori Katayama

Going into the meeting on December 14th to approve the slate of church officers, it appeared that we were facing a great shortage of volunteers to fill our boards and perhaps even worse, a shortage of enthusiasm. What a welcome surprise when four church members stepped up to fill a position that day. Thank you, Wes, Ron, Joe, and Daniel. God is good!

There are still some positions open on the Christian Education and Diaconate Boards as well as the Clerk, and Vice Moderator on the church council. Participation in our church community doesn't mean "hard" work, it means "good" work especially if we work together with the common goal of serving God. As said in Colossians 3:23-24 *"Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord and not for people, knowing that it is from the Lord that you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve."* I implore you to search your heart and make a commitment to serve. Please contact me or the members at large for more information.

This will be a very pivotal year in our church life together. With Pastor Mitchell retiring at the end of July (which will come sooner than you think), a Farewell Committee and a Pastoral Search Committee have been formed to deal with the transition. Beginning this month, these two committees will try to keep the congregation as informed as possible. If you would like to hear the plans for 2026 please come to the Annual Planning Meeting on Saturday, January 3rd.

A Message from our Treasurer...
Bien Reyes

Financial Summary - November 2025

	Month	YTD
Total Income:	\$21,795.72	\$254,904.60
Total Expenses:	\$20,685.04	\$240,308.83
Surplus/(Deficit):	\$1,110.68	\$14,595.77

Board of Trustees
Annie Yamasaki, chairperson

Greetings and Happy Holidays from Trustees Board!

The season of advent is a time of spiritual renewal, a time to prepare our hearts for hope, faith, joy, and peace through prayers. It is especially relevant this turbulent year to remember that we need to have compassion and be kind to each other.

This year, 2025, is ending with some economic uncertainty and geopolitical tensions affecting global peace and everyone's sense of wellbeing.

On behalf of the trustees' board, I wish for all to find

peace, joy, love, and prosperity this Christmas season and the New Year.

In the coming year, Trustees will continue to serve MPCC in matters related to the church's financial and structural integrity and will welcome contribution of your time or other resources. We are grateful for all the support in 2025.

Blessing to all.

Christian Education Board
Steven Woo, chairperson

Hi Everyone,
We had a movie showing "I Still Believe" which told the story of Jeremy Camp and his wife Melissa and what the difficulties they faced. It was an inspiring story that even though things in your life are tough and incomprehensible and you don't see what God has planned for you, to still believe in Him, His timing, and His will, not yours. Ted made delicious popcorn in his popcorn machine. It tasted like it was straight from the theater! We also served sandwiches before Christmas Caroling.



We just had Pastor Mitchell's last Christmas pageant. Thank you Pastor Mitchell and Nitaya for organizing all the costumes and taking pictures. Thank you to BJ for putting together the slideshow of all the pictures.



And thank you to everyone that participated in dressing up and being a part of it. It was great seeing a lot of people during the slideshow. Lastly, thank you to the Yoshimi family for preparing such a wonderful lunch afterwards. It was delicious!

Join us for our first C.E. event this 2026! We have our annual Mochitsuki to celebrate the new year on Sunday, January 4th, at 9am. Help us mold mochi and enjoy some ozoni after service. We will also sell the extra mochi as a fundraiser for our Mission Funds.

Diaconate Board
Lynne Hanamoto

During the month of December we collected the

Christmas Fund that helped provide financial assistance to UCC ministers, church workers, and their families.



We celebrated the season with our beautiful Poinsettias 2025 that decorated our sanctuary and they were given to individuals who are part of our church community when

we went Christmas Caroling, and to others that we were thinking of during this Christmas Season. Thank you Tricia for getting the Poinsettias for our church. Also thanks to those who contributed to help pay for the Poinsettias for 2025, ushers for worship services were Ron Nitta and Joe Palacios, and with support ushers of Art Hanamoto, Ed Yasuda, and Bien Reyes.

Our Advent Candle Readers this year were: Nov. 30: Filipino Fellowship, Dec. 7: Phillips Family, Dec. 14: Toni Martinez Family, Dec. 21 Mari Mori, Annie Mori and Cora, and Dec. 24 Shinto Grandchildren.

For January 2026 we welcome Mamie Okamoto, Ron Nitta, and Joe Palacios to the Diaconate Board!

Wednesday Group

Art Hanamoto

11/19/2025 Terry H., Suzy H., Kiku K., Jean K., Ed Y., Alice H., Ernie A., Beverly Y., Lynne H., Chris C. and Pastor Mitchell folded, labeled and mailed the Good News publication.

12/3/2025 Alice H., Maria Teresa M., Beverly Y., Lynn S., Christine K., Nitaya Y., and Art H. 1) applied first coat of paint on the exterior bathroom door and door frame, 2) disassembled, boxed, and put away the Dia de los Muertos display (ofrenda), 3) packaged Takuan for the upcoming Sunday fundraising event, 4) pulled weeds in the Angel lot, 5) sorted and boxed food cans for Sanchez Elementary food drive, 6) took recyclables to the recycling center, and 7) wrapped goodies bags for Caroling.

12/10/2025 Lori K., Grace S., Chris S., Steven W., BJ W., Nitaya Y., Christine K., Alice H., Lynne H., Art H., and Pastor Mitchell 1) after installation of the new

Special Offerings and Gifts

Brennan, Elaine	In Memory of Shiro & Irene & Kataoka & Karen W.
Chun, Chris	In Memory of Bob M.
Hagihara, Yasuko	In Memory of Carol Koshi
Imada & Shinto Families	In Memory of Sets Shinto & Bob M.
Kobata, Jean	Family Fund
The Koshi Family	Christmas Caroling
Nagano, John	In Memory of wife Lori Nagano
Takahashi, James & Peggy	J.K.F. Scholarship
Takahashi, Patricia	J.K.F. Scholarship
Tanimoto, Michi	In Memory of Ron T., Howard S., Mits M., & Bob M.
Tsunekawa, Jean	In Memory of Bob M. & Ron T.
Yoshida, Beverly	In Memory of Mits M. & Henry W.
Yoshimi, Evelyn	In Celebration of Mother's Birthday, Coffee Hour

carpeting, placed chairs, tables, cabinets, plants, podiums, and music equipment back into the sanctuary, 2) decorated the Christmas tree in the sanctuary, 3) cleaned the lanai, steps to the sanctuary, and Angel lot handicap ramp, 4) organized items in the kitchen cabinets and drawers, 5) boxed and delivered canned food to Sanchez Elementary school and 6) changed the water filters.

12/18/2025 Ernie A., Christine K., Nitaya Y., Maria Teresa M., and Art H. 1) decorated the Christmas table arch in the sanctuary, 2) organized, discarded and gave away Christmas decorations, 3) cut two trees in the parsonage backyard, 4) cleaned the lanai and sanctuary steps, 5) cleaned the kitchen stovetops and microwave, and 6) sorted recyclables and took them to the recycling center.

Prayers of the People**With deepest sympathy to the family/ies of:**

- Ida G.'s patient Norma who passed away in Ida's arms. Ida wanted to shared that Norma was a faithful Presbyterian and they would pray the Lord's prayer together every night.
- Lynne H. requested sympathy prayers for friend Chris and family in the passing of her father.
- Edith S. requested sympathy prayers for sister Doris who passed away in Hawaii.

Prayers of Healing, Comfort and Blessing for:

- We continue to lift up prayers for strength for our sons and daughters: Warren H., Bryan H., and Natasha Y.
- Yvonne and Mike P. received a note from Cinde D. for whom we prayed for weeks ago on behalf of her daughter Michelle and she offers her sincere gratitude to the congregation of MPCC for their prayers. Also, received a note from Yvonne's cousin Carol Ann S. thanking the MPCC congregation for their prayers on behalf of her husband Tony S. who passed last month.
- Annie Y. lift up a prayer of recovery for her husband Ron for his 2nd knee surgery.
- Jenny requested a prayer for Nora for a successful transition as Nora is moving to Northern California to be closer with family.
- Kiko K. requested prayers for friend Emely who will have a carpal tunnel surgery on her right hand.
- Pastor Mitchell received a letter from Minako O. from Japan requesting continued prayers for her breast cancer treatment.
- Jan F. requested prayers for friend Sharon who has breast cancer and on Wednesday will have a double mastectomy.
- Ron N. requested prayers for Joe P. who is sick with the flu.
- Rosa R. was hospitalized due to a recent fall and while there found some additional medical issues with her kidneys.
- Frank M. called in to say "I miss everyone, but I will see you on YouTube. Please say a prayer for me".

Thanksgiving:

- Brian H. extending a sincere thank you for prayers of healing and comfort every Sunday for himself, Natasha, and Warren. Your prayers are greatly appreciated.
- Lori K. lift up a thanksgiving prayer for a successful surgeries for Robert, grandson Enzo, teacher Junko, and Grace.
- Toni M. lifts thanksgiving prayers for life's blessings and Toni also lifts up prayers for everyone.

**January
Birthday
Celebrations**

3	Karen Harada
3	Kurt Publico
4	Mac Reyes
9	Tracy Chao
10	Diana Fukushima
12	Lisa Moreno-Corrales
15	Terry Hino
20	Austin Yoshimi
23	Dave Katayama
24	Josh Hino
24	Jason Takeshita
25	Don Kaneoka
26	Allen Asakura
26	Karen Yasukochi
26	Natasha Young
28	Tomoko Hino
30	Joan Fujita
30	Betsy Kawahara

NOTE:

For prayer requests in the month of January e-mail Pastor Mitchell at myoung@montebelloucc.org or call (323) 893-2672 by the Friday before the Sunday service to be included in the Pastoral Prayer.

Save Used Stamps Update

"Thank You"

A medium size Priority box is almost filled! Hopefully after the holidays more will come in to fill the box. Thank you to all who have been diligently collecting "used" stamps, I greatly appreciate your time and effort.



After Japan receives the stamps, it is sold to collectors. With that money, aides are sent to countries in need.

Our goal at MPCC is to help the church, community, and other nations collectively with other UCC churches collecting "used stamps", we can make a difference! - Evelyn Yoshimi



Mochitsuki
January 4
at 9am

Altar Flowers Donations 2026

Sign-up sheets for Altar Flower donations for 2026 now available. If you would like to donate flowers in memory of a loved one or to celebrate an event in the life of your family, please sign up in Mori Hall or call the church office to check on available dates. We ask for a \$40 donation to cover the cost of the arrangement prepared by our local florist. Thank you for beautifying our worship space!

Annual Planning Meeting
January 3, 2026 9:00am

Our past & new officers and Board members will be planning our church activities/events for 2026.

Database Update!



Please submit any changes in your contact information to our church office to update our 2026 Church Directory. Call our church office (323) 721-5568 or email bwoo@montebelloucc.org



Join us for our Annual Congregational Meeting on
January 25, 2026

Last Month's Photos



November 27-29, 2025
Thanksgiving Program for Pre-K to 8th grade
(Picture during lesson time with Miss Aubrey)



December 8, 2025
New carpet installed in our chapel



December 21, 2025
Sunday school photo with Ms. Nitaya, Sunday school performance during service, and Ukulele group playing “12 days of Christmas” (Hawaiian style)



Sun Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri Sat

				1 New Year's Day Office Closed	2 Winter Ex @8:30am	3 Planning Meeting @9am
4 Holy Communion Mochitsuki @9am	5 Bible Study @10am	6 Bible Study @10am	7 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @7pm	8	9	10 Choir Practice @10am
11 Installation of New Officers & Board Members	12 Bible Study @10am	13 Bible Study @10am	14 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @7pm	15	16	17 Choir Practice @10am
18 Goodnews Deadline	19 Bible Study @10am	20 Bible Study @10am	21 Goodnews Mailing @9am *Dance Class @7pm	22	23	24 Choir Practice @10am
25 Annual Congregational Meeting H.S./College Fellowship	26 Bible Study @10am	27 Bible Study @10am	28 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @7pm	29	30	31 Choir Practice @10am Regional PAAM Meeting

**Coming in
February
2026**

- | | |
|----|------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Jesus Reigns Child Support Offering |
| 17 | Fat Tuesday Fundraiser @BJ's Restaurant |
| 18 | Ash Wednesday |
| 22 | H.S./College Fellowship |

See our updated online calendar at:
<http://Montebelloucc.org>

Join us for our **Virtual & In-Person Worship Service on
Sundays at 10 a.m. :**

YouTube Livestream

Subscribe to our YouTube page to watch our
latest videos

(www.youtube.com/mpccucc)

*Contact our Church Office for more info

