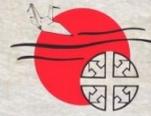




Good News



Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church
A United Church of Christ
Sr. Pastor Rev. Mitchell Young
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March 2026
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"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?" **Isaiah 58:6**

A Fast of Justice

Did you know that the McDonald's Filet-O-Fish sandwich was created in 1962 by Cincinnati franchisee Lou Groen to boost Friday sales during Lent, when Catholic customers abstained from meat? Initially resisted by Ray Kroc, who proposed a pineapple "Hula Burger" instead, the fish sandwich outsold the pineapple burger and became the first permanent menu addition in 1965.

As we enter the sacred season of Lent this March 2026, we know of course that Lenten spiritual discipline is more than just fasting from meat and eating fish on Fridays. Lent is the season in which Church invites us to a time of penitence, self-examination, and spiritual growth. It is a season often marked by "giving things up"—a temporary fast from luxuries or comforts in order to draw closer to God. However, the Prophet Isaiah, in Chapter 58, challenges us to reconsider what a "fast" actually means to God.

The people of Israel, returning to the rubble of their lives after exile, were diligent in their religious

rituals, but they were neglecting the justice and mercy that God demands. They wondered why their fasting went unnoticed. God's reply is a stunning, disruptive call to action: True fasting is not merely about empty stomachs; it is about hungry hearts.

In Isaiah 58:1-12, the fast that God chooses is a "fast of justice." It is a call to:

- Loosen the chains of injustice in our community.
- Share our food with the hungry and care for the vulnerable.
- Undo the yokes of oppression that keep our neighbors in bondage.

This Lent, I invite you to join me in moving beyond traditional Lenten restrictions. Let us make this a season where we add to our lives: more action for justice, more compassion for the marginalized, and a deeper, intentional love for our neighbor. When we turn our attention from our own interests to the needs of the afflicted, Isaiah promises that our light will break forth like the dawn, and we will be called "repairers of the breach" (Isaiah 58:12).

Let us not just "give up" something this Lent. Let us "give" our time, our energy, and our resources to bring God's light into the dark places of our world.

May this be a truly transformative Lent—a time when our fast becomes a feast of justice.

In Christ's Service,
Pastor Mitchell

Worship Schedule

March 1

Holy Communion
"Of Water and Spirit"
John 3:1-17

March 8

"Ripe for Harvesting"
John 4:5-42

March 15

Cookie Walk Fundraiser
"The Signs"
John 9:1-41

March 22

Spring Clean-Up
"Unbind"
John 11:1-45

March 29

Palm Sunday
Guest Speaker Rev. Keith
Hirata
"Cut Branches"
Matthew 21:1-11

A Message from our Moderator...

Lori Katayama

Your church council members are working hard to provide leadership in this year of transition. Please check the board's Good News articles for updates on their events and projects.

The council voted to approve the purchase, installation, and training for two AED units (Automated External Defibrillators). At the meeting we discussed concerns that the device might not be appropriate in certain cases, however, trustee Denise Wada stated that over the years the technology has improved significantly. We thank the trustees for their diligence in looking into this matter.

We are seeking a volunteer co-chair for the bazaar which is scheduled for June 7th. If you would like to help please contact Lynne Hanamoto.

March will be a busy month but please remember to pause to observe Lent. This would be a good opportunity to extend your time and support for the church community. I encourage you to think of our annual theme, *Grateful in All Things, and pass the love of Christ to all you meet.*

A Message from our Treasurer...

Bien Reyes

Financial Summary - January 2026

	Month	YTD
Total Income:	\$11,931.58	\$11,931.58
Total Expenses:	\$18,536.89	\$18,536.89
Surplus/(Deficit):	(\$6,605.31)	(\$6,605.31)

Christian Education Board

Steven Woo, chairperson

The CE board activity starting the year has been light but I would like to announce that Ashley Pablico has joined our board! She joins new member Daniel Mata and returning members Maria Teresa Macias, Julie Tapia, and myself. We are still shorthanded and looking for more people to join, so if you're interested, please let me know. We will have plenty to announce when Easter gets closer, but it's never too late to have

your kids or grandkids join Sunday school.

Diaconate Board

Lynne Hanamoto

The month of March is the month of One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) collection. This special UCC Special Mission Offering of the United Church of Christ supports partners worldwide with ministries that fund health, education, and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response.

We will be taking donations for Lilies to decorate the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday and then give to home bound and those who have lost loved ones.

On March 29 Palm Sunday Service, we look forward to our Guest Speaker Keith Hirata.

Thank you to all who contributed to making our Winter Bento Fundraiser a success. This is the first time we had delicious cod as part of our deluxe bento boxes. Also hope you enjoyed your scratch off cards, which provided you with fortunes as part of the special goody bags. Also thank you to our bakers who made special desserts to add to this February Fundraiser.

Trustees

Annie Yamasaki, chairperson

On behalf of the board of Trustees, wishing you a healthy and prosperous Lunar New Year.

This year will be a year of big transition for all of us here at MPCC. Pastor Mitchell's impending retirement is weighing heavily on many of our minds.

The best way to honor Pastor Mitchell's more than 20 years of service is for us to give him a fond farewell throughout this year. Stay tuned for upcoming events.

We must also remember Nitaya's tireless dedication to our church. There will be a ladies'/gentlemen's tea in her honor on April 25th. Detail will be forthcoming.

The church council brought back the Spring church cleanup this year. It is scheduled for March 22.



Rev. J. K. Fukushima

Trustees would like to inform everyone that the Rev. Joseph K. Fukushima scholarship will be terminated after the last awards are granted at the end of June 2026. This is due to intentional depletion of all funds at the request of the Fukushima family. Anyone wishing to contribute to this fund will be asked to redirect the donations to other causes. Please contact the church office for any questions or concerns regarding this scholarship.

Let's have a momentous year in celebration and be prepared for all the changes we will face in the transition. We would like to have everyone participate in the pleasant and difficult tasks ahead of us. Please contact anyone from any board if you have ideas or wish to be involved in our activities.

Blessings to all!

Wednesday Group
Art Hanamoto

1/21/2026 Terry H., Suzy H., Kiku K., Ed Y., Alice H., Ernie A., June Y., Lynne H., and Pastor Mitchell folded, labeled, and mailed the Good News publication.

Christine K., Nitaya Y., and Art H. 1) cut four trees in the parsonage backyard, 2) removed ice plants around sprinkler heads and planted ground cover and 3) took recyclables to the recycling center.

1/28/2026 Nitaya Y., Christine K., Alice H., Ernie A., Lynne H. and Art H. 1) dug up bricks used as a planter in the backyard parsonage. The bricks were stacked next to the garage, 2) removed overgrown succulents in the Angel lot and planted ground cover, 3) organized items in the kitchen cabinets and drawers, 4) prepared space for the PAAM meeting on Saturday, January 31 and 5) arranged the donated/surplus items on the Mori Hall back table. These items are free for anyone to take.

2/4/2026 Alice H., Ernie A., Christine K., Nitaya Y., and Art H. 1) cleaned up the kitchen refrigerator and threw away old containers, 2) arranged the 'free' items on the Mori Hall back table, 3) put away tables in Mori Hall, 4) cleaned up the tea leaf plants and continued removing overgrown succulents in the Angel lot and 5) checked the gap in the Sunday School wing entrance glass door. Materials will be purchased to seal it.

Special Offerings and Gifts

Chun, Chris	Youth Mission Fund
Yoshimi, Evelyn	In Memory of George Yoshimi

**How We Grow
MPCC's General Fund**

The General Fund takes care of the basic day-to-day operations of our church as well as furthering the mission of our church as a whole. Annual pledges (tithes) help the trustees estimate how to distribute and budget our expenses on a monthly and yearly basis. Weekly offerings and special offerings also contribute to the General Fund unless otherwise indicated.

Building Fund

MPCC's Building Fund is separate from the church's General Fund. Contributions to the fund must be indicated on your offering envelope or in the check memo area. If you have any questions about your pledge please contact Mac Reyes.

Church Family Fund

The Church Family Fund assists families known to our church who are in dire need of assistance. Funds are allocated by committee. If you are able, please donate to the fund.

Youth Mission Fund & Summer Ex Fund

Donations to the Youth Mission Fund will be used to send our youth on trips to serve abroad and locally. The Summer Ex Fund provides scholarships for families who are not able to cover the registration fees. Both are separate from MPCC's General Fund and checks should be written separate from your regular offering.



Prayers of the People

With deepest sympathy to the family/families of:

- Lori K.'s cousin Mike U. passed away suddenly in Ohio. Mike was 66 years old. Please pray for Mike's siblings Karen and Dave U. that they can get through this difficult time together.
- Mike and Yvonne P. asked for prayers of comfort and condolences for John F.'s family as he passed from a result of complications during surgery.

Prayers of Healing, Comfort and Blessing for:

- We continue to lift up prayers for strength and health for our sons and daughters: Warren H., Bryan H., and Natasha Y.
- Maria M. who has the flu and to all of those who are experiencing the flu right now.
- Ku'ulei P. who is undergoing therapy for her neck and right shoulder.
- Prayers for Minnesota due to I.C.E being in the state. We pray for true peace and for leaders to choose justice over selfishness.
- Mike and Yvonne P. ask for prayers of comfort and healing for their long-time Montebello neighbor Irene L. who is in a hospice care facility because of her extremely low blood count level. Also, prayers for friend Cornelius C. who fell in his house and fractured his hip.
- Jan F. requested prayers for college friend Emmett R. who collapsed last week. Let us pray for Emmett's healing as medical staff determine best treatment. Also, follow up prayer for friend Sharon H. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and has finished her chemo.

Thanksgiving:

- Wes and Mamie Q. lifted up prayers of thanksgiving and joy for the birth of their grandchild! Chloe Mei C. was born on January 12, 2026.
- Mac R. lifted up prayers of thanksgiving for returning from the Philippines safely and also, thanksgiving for niece's daughter Skye who was found right away after missing overnight.
- Thanksgiving for Jesse E. for his successful surgery and his doctors declared him cancer free.
- Melody T. requested prayers of thanksgiving for son Daniel who found a medical technician job and is training with a registered pharmacist and registered nurse.
- Maria Teresa requested prayers of thanksgiving for Maria M. who had the flu for couple of weeks and is back to church.

Traveling Mercies:

- Carolyn W. is asking for travel mercy and safety for son Keith as he drives daughter Ashley and friends to school for their new semester.
- Frank M. requested travel mercy prayers for daughter Keiko and granddaughter Kimiko who are in Japan and will be traveling back to Hawaii.

**March
Birthday
Celebrations**

- 1 Courtney Kobata
- 1 Emiko Kaneoka
- 1 Chris Low
- 1 Bien Reyes
- 3 Kaytlyn Matsuda
- 3 Mike Quach
- 5 Katrina Reyes
- 7 Elora Jang
- 8 Yasuko Hagihara
- 9 Madeline Jang
- 9 Grace Sato
- 14 Sandra Low
- 14 Kyle Yasukochi
- 14 Theodore Jang
- 16 Irene Murukami
- 17 Jude Camberos
- 19 Desiree Martinez
- 19 Joy Yogi
- 21 William Okamoto
- 22 Roger Ng
- 23 Lynne Hanamoto
- 30 Joe Palacios
- 30 David Tapia
- 30 Ed Kobayashi
- 30 Jane Masuda
- 31 Pam Hagihara

2026 Directory
Update for
Irene Murakami
Cell (323) 580-8048

NOTE:

For prayer requests in the month of March 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"**

SAVE those stamps (even pre-sorted stamps are accepted)!

I will cut them for you and please leave at least 1/8 inches on the edges.

Thank you to all who have diligently collected 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



The 'Grateful in All Things' Tea

Originally planned as a Ladies Tea, the "Grateful in All Things" Tea will be an event open to both women and men. The price per person is \$15 to cover table rentals and other expenses.

Nine hostesses have graciously stepped forward to prepare a table and invite others to join them for tea, a light lunch, desserts, entertainment, a photo booth and games. Our special guest of honor will be Nitaya Young. Table information and sign ups will begin on March 1st.

If you are interested in attending please contact Lori Katayama.



Guest preacher for March 29: Rev. Keith Hirata

Rev. Keith Takeshi Hirata was born and raised in Chicago and is a fourth-generation Okinawan-American. His family made their way to Chicago after three generations of life in Hawai'i (Big Island and O'ahu). Keith got his undergraduate degree from the University of Illinois in History and graduated from Fuller Theological Seminary after marrying Amy Kokubu (of Monterey Park) and having two children, Kyra (27) and Kaeden (25).

He worked for the Japanese Government serving as an aide to a prefectural governor and then later at a Japanese Consulate before being called to full-time vocational ministry. His first call was to serve university students in the Midwest, and for the last 8 years, after his move to LA, as a full-time hospice chaplain and as a parttime associate pastor of Union Church of Los Angeles.

Last Month's Photos

January 25, 2026

Celebrated Natasha Young's birthday and had boba and board games fellowship



January 31, 2026

MPCC hosted the Regional PAAM Meeting



February 13, 2026

Celebrated Lunar New Year and hosted Asian Youth Collective with Asian families affected by I.C.E. detainment.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>1</p> <p>Holy Communion</p> <p>C.E. Board Meeting @11:30am</p>	<p>2</p> <p>*Beg. Japanese Class @1:30pm</p> <p>*Japanese Class @2:30pm</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Bible Study @10am</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Wednesday Group @8am</p> <p>*Dance Class @7pm</p>	<p>5</p>	<p>6</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Choir Practice @10am</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Trustees/ Diaconate Board Meeting @11:30am</p>	<p>9</p> <p>*Beg. Japanese Class @1:30pm</p> <p>*Japanese Class @2:30pm</p>	<p>10</p> <p>Bible Study @10am</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Wednesday Group @8am</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Choir Practice @10am</p>
<p>15</p> <p>Cookie Walk Fundraiser</p> <p>Council Meeting @11:30am</p>	<p>16</p> <p>*Beg. Japanese Class @1:30pm</p> <p>*Japanese Class @2:30pm</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Bible Study @10am</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Wednesday Group @8am</p> <p>*Dance Class @7pm</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Choir Practice @10am</p> <p>Night of Champions</p>
<p>22</p> <p>Goodnews Articles due</p> <p>Spring Clean-Up</p>	<p>23</p> <p>*Beg. Japanese Class @1:30pm</p> <p>*Japanese Class @2:30pm</p>	<p>24</p> <p>Bible Study @10am</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Goodnews Mailing @9am</p> <p>*Dance Class @7pm</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Choir Practice @10am</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Guest Speaker Rev. Keith Hirata</p> <p>H.S./College Fellowship</p>	<p>30</p> <p>*Beg. Japanese Class @1:30pm</p> <p>*Japanese Class @2:30pm</p>	<p>31</p> <p>Bible Study @10am</p>	<p>NOTE: Events marked with an asterisk (*) are private classes and not church events. Please contact the church office for more information.</p>			

<p>Coming in April 2026</p>	2	Maundy Thursday @MPCC	<p>See our updated online calendar at:</p> <p>http://Montebelloucc.org</p>
	3	Good Friday @San Marino UCC	
	5	Easter Sunday/Easter Egg Hunt	
	25	The "Grateful in All Things" Tea	
	26	HS/College Fellowship	

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

