



Good News



Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church

A United Church of Christ

Sr. Pastor Rev. Mitchell Young

144 S. Greenwood Ave. Montebello, CA 90640

(323) 721-5568 MontebelloUCC.org

January 2025

Volume XLIV No. 1

Worship Schedule

January 5

Holy Communion

Mochitsuki

"Enlightened"

John 1:1-18

January 12

Installation of New Church

Officers & Board

"Heaven Opened"

Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 19

"Fill, Draw, Taste"

John 2:1-11

January 26

Annual Congregational

Meeting

"Proclaim"

Luke 4:14-21

[In the season of Christmas and as we enter the New Year 2025, Pastor Mitchell yields his usual pastor article to share important excerpts from the Pastoral Letter by our National and Conference Leadership of the United Church of Christ]

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid." John 14:27

Dear beloved United Church of Christ community,
During this blessed Advent season, we enter a time of hopeful anticipation. We wait patiently for what

God will newly reveal to us, and trust that God is indeed birthing bold possibilities amid our uncertainty and fears, as well as our hopes and joys. It is appropriate in this season for us to reflect on how God might be calling us in fresh ways to be the "united and uniting" church we profess as our identity in the United Church of Christ. We offer this letter as our invitation to prayerfully consider how we can most faithfully be Christ's church in this moment, with the joyful confidence that God is indeed doing a new thing among us.

The Great Divide

In the aftermath of the United States presidential election and the days of campaigning leading up to the election of the 47th president of the United States, the political divide in the country was evident. This political divide over critical social issues is not new; however, the polarization on the issues has created a chasm where there once was an aisle. More critically, this division is evident in the church, where diversity is broad and runs deep. This has always been so in the United Church of Christ, across the mainline churches and in the church at large. There is an inherent diversity in the church which includes political diversity.

The political divide poses a threat to the unity of the church. While there is value held in identifying that "unity does not mean uniformity," the political narratives of the day are quite different from those seen in the recent past.

The ministry of Jesus was one that prioritized those on the margins of society. His ministry was bold and prophetic, speaking to and against the religious norms of his day, which perpetuated injustices and oppressed "the least of these." Je-

sus brought a message of love. When asked by his disciples about the greatest commandment, Jesus responded: "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Matthew 22:37b-39). This is love which compels us to action.

Christian Unity

In the days before his death, Jesus taught the disciples and prayed for them. The motto of the United Church of Christ, "that they may all be one" (John 17:21), is a part of a prayer Jesus offered for his disciples. He prayed: "I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word" (John 17:20). This earnest prayer was for the disciples who Jesus knew, and for those who would believe in him through the disciples. Jesus prayed for the unity of his followers.

Justice

The perpetuation of injustice is challenging to the well-being of all creation. The quest for a just world for all is yet before us. Martin Luther King, Jr., reminded us that "the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." The church is called to participate in seeking justice in the world. While there are times when the church has been silent, the church has also followed the teachings of Jesus and has been on the side of the oppressed, advocating for justice.

The UCC and its predecessor bodies have a history of being on the forefront of justice:

A Vision for the Future

We are a "big tent" in the UCC. This big tent is identified by the

multiplicity of ways members of the UCC reflect the categories of diversity present in the United States and in the world. We are ecumenical, coming from disparate places and experiences with roots well beyond the identified streams in the UCC's history. We are representative of language, racial/ethnic, gender, theological, and political diversities, to name a few areas of our diverse landscape. We are reflective of the beloved community, one where love lives. Our commitment to live this diversity is a commitment to live into the radical love Jesus taught.

We wait in hope, believing that God is ever-present with us and will keep us through this moment, providing peace and comfort. God will also be with us in the days that are ahead, granting us strength, courage, and wisdom. We wait in hope, believing that change is possible as we seek a just world for all.

As we wait:

- We pray.
- We care for those in need.
- We advocate for change.
- We speak truth to power.

God of hope and love, you are ever-present with us. We wait patiently for you, knowing that you hear our prayers. The call to do justice is on-going. As governments come and go, we are called to bring healing and care to those in need. This is such a moment. A time when there will be the hungry to feed, the homeless to house, and the widows and orphans who will need our care. This is a time when we will continue to honor the inherent dignity and worth of each of your children. This is a time when the church will be prophetic, calling for truth and for change. Provide your church and all who lead and minister within it hope and healing for the living of these days. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson General Minister and President

Rev. Shari Prestemon Acting Associate General Minister

Dr. Bentley DeBardelaben-Phillips Transitional Executive Minister

and the Council of (36) Conference Ministers

A Message from our Moderator...

Lori Katayama

Fifteen years ago the Vision Committee was formed to strategize and brainstorm for the future of our church. At the planning meeting in 2010, the question posed was "What would you like to see God do in and through our ministry here at MPCC?" After months of prayer and deliberation the committee determined that their vision was for growth through:

- Nurturing spiritual development by learning about Jesus Christ,
- Providing every believer with opportunities to discover their God-given gifts and talents to better serve the church, wider community, and the world,

- Enhancing and expanding our church campus,
- Increasing our Ministry Staff so that we may nurture our youth and develop young adult, women's, eldercare, and family ministries.

Throughout the process, the vision committee was always mindful of the tenet that God is not interested in what we can do; He is interested in what He can do through us when we are willing vessels. The church theme for the year 2010 was "With God, Everything is Possible."

Here we are 15 years later and that question and that vision still holds true. Thus far we have completed the "expanding our church campus" goal by purchasing the Chavez property and creating a more contiguous space with the addition of the parking lot. Although it hasn't expanded the size of our indoor gathering spaces, it will provide better traffic flow and, more importantly, prevent an outside entity from purchasing the property.

Increasing our ministry staff was a fiscal impossibility since almost 78% of our annual budget is spent on administrative expenses already. Our current staff along with the diaconate and Christian education boards have been tasked with and have been providing ways to reach our elders, youth, and family although more support is needed.

That leaves the first two goals of the Vision Committee:

- Nurturing spiritual development by learning about Jesus Christ,
- Providing every believer with opportunities to discover their God-given gifts and talents to better serve the church, wider community and the world.

This year, I hope and pray that MPCC will put more effort into realizing these goals. As your moderator, I hope to continue working with the church board and committee members to find new ways to not only provide more opportunities to learn and serve but also new ways to bring in people from outside our walls. I pray you will join me in these efforts and I encourage everyone to attend the annual planning meeting on Saturday, January 4 at 9am.

Wednesday Group

Bob Miwa

10/23/24 Ed Yasuda, Lynne Hanamoto, Ernie Agcaoili, Alice Higashi, Kiku Kobashigawa, Pastor Mitchell and Nitaya Young, Terry and Suzy Hino, and Christine Kizuka folded and labeled the Good News for mailing. They also swept and cleaned the Greenwood parking lot and parkway. Afterwards, sorted and sold recycled cans, plastic bottles, and glass bottles.

11/30/24 Alice Higashi, Lynne Hanamoto, Ernie Agcaoili, Christine Kizuka, and Nitaya Young swept

and cleaned both parking lots. Afterwards, pulled weeds and cleaned along the Sunday school alley. They also folded T-shirts and aprons from Bazaar and cleaned two Sunday school classrooms.

11/6/24 Attending service for Logan Tao at St. Mary Assumption in Whittier.

11/13/24 Art and Lynne Hanamoto, Alice Higashi, Ernie Agcaoili, Christine Kizuka, and Nitaya Young covered a hole in a ceiling and cleaned the wall in the youth room. They cleaned four Sunday school rooms and moved boxes to the boutique room. Afterwards, vacuumed the youth room and swept and watered both parking lots. Lastly, put more solar lights on the Chavez parking lot.

11/20/24 Ernie Agcaoili, Alice Higashi, Terry and Suzy Hino, Ed Yasuda, Christine Kizuka, Kiku Kobashigwa, Art and Lynne Hanamoto, and Nitaya Young folded and labeled the Good News. They cleaned the yard and music room. They also threw out 2 couches and a chair in the youth room. Lastly, they sanded and cleaned the wood wall entrance to the sanctuary.

12/4/24 Ernie Agcaoili, Kiko Kawamoto, Frank (Lynne's friend), Art and Lynne Hanamoto, Nitaya Young, and Christine Kizuka cleaned the garage for Frank to install security light for the parsonage backyard. They painted the wood wall to the sanctuary entrance, sorted can foods for the food drive, wrapped Christmas presents for Sunday school students, swept the lanai and both parking lots and parkway, cleaned behind the shed, cleaned the kitchen ceiling and fan vent, cleaned 1/4 of the Mori Hall wall, changed drinking water filters, and lastly, pulled weeds on Angel's lot.

12/11/24 Ernie Agcaoili, Pastor Mitchell and Nitaya Young, Frank (Lynne's Friend), Alice Higashi, Grace Sato, and Christine Kizuka sorted donated foods and delivered them to the Sanchez Elementary school. Afterwards, cleaned the Greenwood parking lot and parkway, cleaned the glass door to Mori Hall, adjusted the security light for the parsonage backyard, planted persimmon and orange tree on the Angel's lot, and cleaned the top and back of two refrigerators in Mori Hall.

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. Please contact the trustees if you wish to receive a pre-printed box set of offering envelopes.

Building Fund

MPCC's Building Fund is separate from the church's

Special Offerings and Gifts

Castanares, Mario	Special Offering
Hamabe, Ken & Meg	In Memory of Henry Watanabe
Takahashi, Patricia	J.K. Fukushima Scholarship
Tao, Tricia	In Memory of Henry Watanabe
Yoshimi, Evelyn	Mochi donation, In Memory of Rev. Hino, & In Gratitude to All MPCC Members

Poinsettia Donors

Ben & Carol Fujita
Carolyn Watanabe
Evelyn Yoshimi
Howard & Edith Sakamoto
Jane Masuda
Jean Kobata
Mitchell & Nitaya Young
Mits & Irene Murukami
Ron & Annie Yamasaki
Terry & Suzy Hino



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.



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST
a just world for all

Prayers of the People

With deepest sympathy to the family/ies of:

- Kiku K. requested prayers for good friend Nancy who lost her sister Ellen.
- Annie Y. requested prayers for the family of Lynne K. Lynne was Jocelyn's first babysitter.
- Lynne H. lift up prayers for uncle Pete who passed away at the age of 100.6 years old

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. As for Warren, wife Melissa shared that there was a slight chance of getting an infection from Warren's most recent surgery, and sure enough he did. Fortunately, with the help of antibiotics, prayers were being answered by the next 36 hours.
- Michi T. requested prayers for husband Ron who was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. He was hospitalized. Ron is now at home having physical therapy and in-home services.
- Kiku Y. requested healing prayers for Roy's best friend Stan S. who is not feeling well.
- Lisa M. requested prayers for friend Kimberly S. who is battling a stalker.
- Maria M. requested prayers for husband Raul M. who will be having shoulder surgery on December 10th.
- Melody T. requested prayers for recovery from respiratory infection
- Bien R. requested prayers for wife Mac R. who is recovering from the flu.
- Ivonne P. lift up prayers for all the young and old people going back to school.
- Lynne H. requested prayers for friend Anne and husband who lost their home in San Marino to an electrical fire.
- Congregation lift up prayers of healing for Evelyn H. Her left arm and hand are in a lot of pain due to arthritis.
- Jan F. lift up prayers for her sister Joy who had hip replacement and going thru a lot of pain.
- Ida G. requested prayers for her family.
- Kiku K. lift up prayers for old friend Linda S. who had bronchitis and developed to pneumonia.

Traveling Mercies for:

- Carolyn W. requested travel mercy prayers for son Marc who will be visiting Japan on November 29th. Also, for son Keith as he drives up north to pick up daughter Ashley.
- Mac requested travel mercy prayers for The Reyes family who will be traveling to Northern California.
- Ivonne P. lift up travel mercy prayers for Andrea and Neranti who are coming to Apple Valley and then to Hawaii.

Thanksgiving:

- Melissa H. posted on Friday regarding husband Warren H.: "As time goes on, we feel we are getting our 'Warren back'. All glory to God and it's a beautiful thing to see His people come together in prayer. I'm learning never underestimate the power of prayer."
- Jim and Haru Y. Thanks for Prayers for son John with last week's brain surgery. The surgery was successful!
- Toni M. said hello to everyone and have a blessed Thanksgiving Day. And of, course Toni lifts up prayers for everyone.
- Raul M. wishes to thank the church for all your prayers for his recent shoulder surgery.
- Frank M. requested thanksgiving prayer for sister Hilda who turned 91 years old on November, 27th.

January Birthday Celebrations

3	Karen Harada
3	Kurt Pablico
4	Mac Reyes
9	Tracy Chao
10	Diana Fukushima
15	Terry Hino
18	Ron Tanimoto
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 al-most 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



Annual Planning Meeting January 4, 2025 9:00am

Our past & new officers and Board members will be planning our church activities/events for 2025.

Database Update!



Please submit any changes in your contact information to our church office to

update our 2025 Church Directory.

Call our church office

(323) 721-5568 or

email bwoo@montebelloucc.org



Altar Flowers Donations 2025

Sign-up sheets for Altar Flower donations for 2025 now available. If you would like to donate flowers in memory of a loved one or to celebrate an event in the life of you 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!



**Join us for our Annual Congregational Meeting on
January 26, 2025**

Last Month's Photos



December 8, 2024
Guest Speaker Rev. Scott Furukawa received Advent stole



December 11, 2024
Ernie Agcaoili planted MPCC's first Kaki tree in Angel's lot. The Kaki tree yielded 9 fruits and served after the Thanksgiving Sunday service. Pastor Mitchell planted our first orange tree in Angel's lot. The first orange fell off while planting and was enjoyed by the Wednesday volunteers: "Delicious!"



Visited some of our church members in the holiday season and sang Christmas carols to them.



Sun
Mon
Tue
Wed
Thu
Fri
Sat

			1 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @4pm	2	3	4 Planning Meeting @9am
NOTE: Events marked with an asterisk (*) are private classes and not church events. Please contact the church office for more information.						
5 Holy Communion Mochitsuki @9am	6 *Japanese Class @2pm	7 Bible Study @10am	8 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @4pm	9	10	11 Installation of New Conference Minister Rev. Rachael Pryor @1pm
12 Installation of New Officers & Board Members	13 *Japanese Class @2pm	14 Bible Study @10am	15 Wednesday Group @9am	16	17	18
19 Goodnews Deadline	20 *Japanese Class @2pm	21 Bible Study @10am	22 Goodnews Mailing *Dance Class @7pm	23	24	25
26 Annual Congregational Meeting	27 *Japanese Class @2pm	28 Bible Study @10am	29 Wednesday Group @9am *Dance Class @7pm	30	31	

Coming in
February
23
Guest Speaker Phifer Nicholson
2025
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

