



Good News



Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church
A United Church of Christ
 Sr. Pastor Rev. Mitchell Young
 144 S. Greenwood Ave. Montebello, CA 90640
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February 2025

Volume XLIV No. II

Worship Schedule

February 2

Holy Communion
 "Through the Mist"
 Luke 4:21-30



February 9

"Into the Deep"
 Luke 5:11

February 16

"Surprising Teaching"
 John 2:1-11

February 23

Guest Speaker
 Phifer Nicholson
 "A Good Measure"
 Luke 6:27-38

"No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us, and his love is perfected in us."

1 John 4:12

Where Is God: in Fires or in Presidents?

Epiphany greetings sisters and brothers in Christ and fellow Americans! What can I say in this season of Epiphany as a season of shining light when Christians strive to recognize the unveiling of Christ's identity?

I first want to commend you on your open hearts as we opened our doors to our sister UCC church, the Altadena Community Church, as they worshipped with

us in the few days after all their buildings burned to the ground in the Eaton Canyon fire. We barely had opportunity to acknowledge the cancellation of the installation service of our new Conference Minister, the Rev. Rachael Pryor which we would have hosted on our MPCC campus the day before. Yet, Rev. Pryor was able to deliver a hopeful message about our oneness in Christ's baptism to both our congregations.

Yet with all the media attention (including NBC News, LA Times, Fox 11 LA, and among others), one standout moment was the Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström's interview with the LA Times from our back lot afforded this theodicy: Theodicy is the question of "Where is God when terrible things happen?" And so you would ask that very question naturally today when you see what's happened. But if you instead say, "Where is God?" God is in the eyes of the first responders who showed up and cut a path so that we could start to attack the fire. God is in those people who are standing by the side of the road who were giving out free water because they know people need it. God is in the responders who were keeping the buildings safe around so that people have

something to return to. And that is truly a vision of what it is to see God at work in the world. It's working through our hands because we are now Christ's hands on earth. We have the heart. We have the hands. And we have the will to make this a better place for everybody."

And as I prepare this pastor article we also prepare to inaugurate a new (old) President. Eight years ago, I quoted what comedian Dave Chappelle said at the end of this Saturday Night Live monologue on the Saturday immediately following the Presidential election of 2016: "...I'm wishing Donald Trump luck. And I'm going to give him a chance, and we, the historically disenfranchised, demand that he give us one too. Thank you very much."

Here eight years later, I again quote the ending of Dave Chappelle's Saturday Night Live monologue delivered 2 days before the inauguration: "Donald Trump, whether people voted for you or not, they're all counting on you, whether they like you or not, they're all counting naturally today when you see on you. The whole world is counting on you. I mean this when I say this: 'Good luck'. Please, do better next time. Please, all of us, do better next time. Do not forget your humanity and please have empathy for displaced people whether they're in the Palisades or Palestine. Thank you very much..."

Looking for God in One Another, Pastor Mitchell

A Message from our Moderator...*Lori Katayama*

The Annual Planning Meeting was held on Saturday, January 4th with approximately 20-25 people present. Even though our attendance was hampered by illnesses, we were able to accomplish a great deal by completing our 2025 church calendar, conducting board meetings, and adding/reviewing our short term goal list. We selected two themes from which our members will choose as our annual theme and both revolve around being a more welcoming church.

Little did we know that this theme would have an immediacy to it as within a few days our sister church, Altadena Community Church, was lost to the Eaton Fire. As Pastor Mitchell made us all aware of the tragedy and dire needs of their congregants, we were blessed to be able to open our arms and hearts and join in worship with them on January 12th. Thank you to everyone who has donated to help their church and members rebuild.

The 2024 Annual Report will be distributed on or before the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 26th. Please pick up a copy and give feedback regarding the various reports included within. Your opinions, positive and negative, are deeply valued.

Christian Education Board*Steven Woo, chairperson*

Hello Everyone,
Happy New Year! We started our new year with our usual *Mochitsuki* mochi-making. I would like to thank the CE board and everyone who volunteered to help, especially the Low family for making the soup, the Furogawa's for their mochi equipment, and the Katayama's for assisting in our event. We sold extra mochi that will be going towards a Mammoth trip with the youth in March.

**Wednesday Group***Bob Miwa*

12/18/24 Ed Yasuda, Lynne and Art Hanamoto, Ernie Agcaoili, Alice Higashi, Kiku Kobashigawa, Pastor Mitchell and Nitaya Young, Terry and Suzy Hino, Christine Kizuka, Beverly

Yoshida, Christine Chun, and Grace Sato folded and labeled the Good News for mailing. We had a potluck lunch to honor Grace Sato for serving with the Wednesday Group. We also swept and cleaned the Greenwood parking lot and parkway.

12/17/24 Ernie Agcaoili, Art Hanamoto, and Nitaya Young cleaned, fixed, and painted the Mori Hall walls and 2 door handles. Afterwards, they cleaned and fixed the wood box bench and the small wood bench in lanai. They also fixed and painted 4 Sunday school doors, then scraped and painted all windows on the Sunday school building on the Angel lot side.

1/8/25 Lynne and Art Hanamoto, Beverly Yoshida, Alice Higashi, Maria Teresa, Ernie Agcaoili, Lori and Aaron Katayama, Christine Kizuka, and Nitaya and Pastor Mitchell Young covered three bulletin boards in the S.S. wing, cleaned the conference room, disposed of the giant green triangle board, arranged kitchen drawers, cleaned the freezer and refrigerators, cleaned the stage, cleaned all door handles in Mori Hall, S.S. wing, and sanctuary. Outside they power-washed the lanai and S.S. alley, planted a calamansi and 4 ti leaf plants, and weed whacked the Greenwood parkway and both Greenwood and Los Aneles parking lots. They also cleaned the welcome table in the Sanctuary and tables in Mori Hall.

A Message of Sympathy...*Rev. Makoto Takahashi**(Conference Minister, Tohoku Conference)**Rev. Etsuya Kataoka**(World Mission Chair, Tohoku Conference)*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We have heard the news about the wildfires that started in the Los Angeles area on January 7th. On behalf of the Tohoku Conference of the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) we would like to express our deepest sympathies.

News of the wildfires has been taken up in the news media as well as the internet, and we have also heard through personal channels. We are pained to see the great devastation and loss. In particular, we are left speechless to learn that the Altadena Community Church was burned to the ground. In fact, churches in our own Tohoku Conference had just been uplifted and encouraged through the Christmas Card exchange arranged through the Common Global Ministries (CGMB).

In addition to some churches that have lost their sanctuary, we know that church members have lost their homes, neighborhoods, and their beloved

Special Offerings and Gifts

Brennan, Edmund & Elaine	In Memory of Irene K. & Karen W.
Hino, Suzy	In Celebration of Terry's Birthday
Inaba, Nancy	In Memory of Miyo Inaba
Isozaki Family	In Memory of Masuko "Matsy" sozaki
Kobashigawa, Kiku	Family Fund
Koshi, David	Thank you for Christmas Caroling
Okamura, Mike	In Memory of Masako & Paul Okamura
Takahashi Family	In Memory of James & Peggy Takahashi
Watanabe, Carolyn	In Memory of Logan Tao
Yasuda, Ed	Special Offering
Yoshida, Beverly	In Memory of Ray Y. & Betty F.
Yoshimi, Evelyn	Holiday Greetings

Ken & Meg Hamabe
 Shoichi & Evelyn Hashizume
 Alice Higashi
 Terry & Suzy Hino
 Janet Iwata
 David & Lori Katayama
 Jane Masuda
 Minnie Mekata
 Bob Miwa
 Rev. Michio & Helen Oyakawa
 Dean & Karen Petersen
 Mike & Yvonne Phillips
 Nora Kuulei Poole
 Howard & Edith Sakamoto
 Chris & Grace Sato
 Tricia Tao
 Eileen Uyesugi-Mitsueda
 Wada Family
 Carolyn Watanabe
 Kiku & Ryan Yamada
 Ken & Joy Yogi
 Jim & Haru Yoshitake
 Evelyn Yoshimi
 Pastor Mitchell & Nitaya Young

hometown. We pray that God will comfort and encourage not only these families, but all of your friends and family who are experiencing anxiety and struggling with feelings of despair. We want you to know that the Tohoku Conference will do whatever we can to gather support and show our solidarity for the people of your land.

We send our sympathies and pray that the wildfires will be extinguished as soon as possible.

Christmas Donations 2024

Ernest Agcaoili
 Chris Chun
 Pamela Hagihara
 Yasuko Hagihara
 Ken & Meg Hamabe
 Art & Lynne Hanamoto
 Barbara Hangai
 Shoichi & Evelyn Hashizume
 Alice Higashi
 Glenn & Tomoko Hino
 Terry & Suzy Hino
 Janet Iwata
 Kuni Kanegae
 Betsy Kawahara
 Kiku Yamada Kobashigawa
 Jean Kobata
 Jane Masuda
 Tak Matsuno
 Minnie Mekata
 Bob Miwa
 Mari Mori
 Nancy Mori
 Mits & Irene Murakami
 Ron & Nancy Nitta
 Wes & Mamie Okamoto
 Rev. Michio & Helen Oyakawa
 Dean & Karen Petersen
 Nora Kuulei Poole
 Ken Sakaidas
 Chris & Grace Sato
 Les & Judy Shima
 Kay Takahashi
 Jim Tanouye
 Tricia Tao
 Glenn Tsunekawa
 Jean Tsunekawa
 Eileen Uyesugi-Mitsueda
 Mariko Wada
 Carolyn Watanabe
 Ed Yasuda
 Ken & Joy Yogi
 Evelyn Yoshimi
 Beverly Yoshida
 Jim & Haru Yoshitake

Thanksgiving Donations 2024

Ernest Agcaoili
 Chris Chun
 Ben & Carol Fujita
 Steve & Naomi Furogawa

Prayers of the People

With deepest sympathy to the family/ies of:

- Raquel M. for friend EJ who recently lost his grandmother.
- The family of MPCC lift up prayers for member Mary I. who passed away last Sunday morning.
- Kiku Y. for Roy's best friend Stan S. who passed away on Christmas day.
- Lisa M. for Ramon's friend Adrian, who passed away on Christmas day.
- Jan and Jay F. requested comfort and strength for the passing of former neighbor's son Timothy B. Timothy passed away on New Year's Day because of cancer and was 41 years old.
- Lori K. for Robert H. and Andie C. on the lost of his mother (her grandmother) in Michigan.
- Frank M.'s sister Hilda passed away. Please pray for strength and comfort for Hilda's family.
- Jan F. for Carl B. who lost his wife Linda. Linda was Jan's principal.

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 Teresa M. for her stepfather Carlos C. who is in the hospital following the traumatic events of being kidnapped, robbed, and physically assaulted.
- Rosa R. as she was still hospitalized for a severe allergic reaction. A few weeks after she broke her two toes.
- Frank M. for sister-in-law Grace S. who is having a hard time with her eyesight.
- Ivonne P. for church friends Michi and Ron T.
- Joe P. for father-in-law Samuel who got a cold while he was in Colorado.
- Lisa M. for friend Kimmy and her children.
- Frank M. for all the people who were affected by the tragic attack in New Orleans.
- Lynne H. for a fatal Honolulu new year's fireworks accident. Many people lost lives and many people were injured.
- Michi T. for her friend Hayleigh's nephew Colton; Colton's narrowing aorta surgery went well.
- Mike and Ivonne P. for guidance and comfort prayers for son David and Joelle and their children Aza and Zora after the devastating loss of their home.
- Pastor Mitchell lifted up strong and hopeful prayers for Jose and Maria C. whose family lost 3 homes in Altadena. Jose says, we're safe and can build homes again.
- Lynne H. for best friend from college Karen H. who lost her home on the Palisades fire.
- Irene M. for husband Mits M. as he continues to be treated for pneumonia in the hospital.
- Congregation lift up healing prayers for Joe P. Joe has been working outside and complains about breathing problems.
- Maria Teresa. M. for her mother Teresa L. Teresa's L. surgery went well and now she's recovering.

Traveling Mercies for:

- Mac R. for sister Estelita who will be traveling back to the Philippines on 12.29.2024.
- Sandra L. for son Daniel L. and wife Regina L. who are coming to visit for 3 days for Christmas.
- Ivonne P. for Andrea and Randy who will be traveling to San Leandro and then to Hawaii. Also, for Aza on the road to Santa Cruz and Kunta going back to Georgia.
- Carolyn W. for son, Keith and coworkers as they fly to Georgia for work on January 9 and return the following week. Also, for son Keith and his daughter, Ashley as Keith drives her back to school for the new semester.
- Joe P. for son Joe Jr. who will be traveling to Thailand for 3 weeks for an international conference.
- Frank M. for son Mark, who went to Mexico and was expected to be back several days ago.
- Wes and Mamie O. as they travel to Hawaii and Japan.

Thanksgiving:

- Ed for his lost and found wallet. He was missing his wallet for couple of weeks, and finally found it under his car seat.
- Glenn H. for the church's new AV system. Specially Annie Y. and Steven W. who worked hard on getting the project going and for everyone who donated their time and talent.
- Minako O. Prayer of thanksgiving for one year of no metastasis for Minako; for newly married daughter Mai; for Sendai Higashi Church's transition to a new pastor next April.
- Lynne H. for former MPCC member Rich Y. His mother Mary will be turning 100 years on January 7, 2025.
- Mamie and Wes O. "We had to evacuate from our home but have been able to return. Please pray for the safety of those in the fire zone areas and for the first responders."

February Birthday Celebrations

1	Patsy Matsuda
1	Lisa Tanaka
2	Cassandra Schwamborn
4	Aubrey Publico
8	Mamie Okamoto
9	Vicki Iwata
10	Harper Ng
11	Kristyn Lee
12	Anakin Ferrer-Jenkins
13	Andie Cardenas
13	Jason Hino
15	Carolyn Barragan
17	Andrea Phillips
18	Menchie Alimboyao
19	Heather Guerrero
20	Glen Tsunekawa
22	Brandon Iwata
23	Eileen Purisima
24	Janelle Tapia
25	Laura Sakamoto
25	Kiko Kawamoto
26	Beverly Yoshida
26	Kristin Iwata
26	Jean Kobata

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

Mandatory Food Waste Segregation

In California, food waste must be separated from trash and collected for composting or anaerobic digestion. This law went into effect in January 2022.

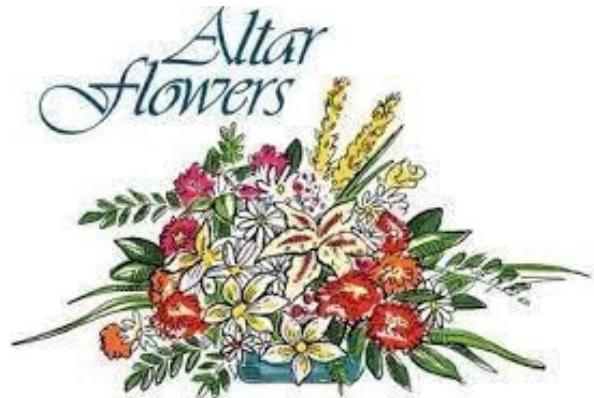
Please put all food waste and organics in food waste bins located in Mori Hall and the kitchen. Let's be GREEN! (And it's the law!)

**Guest Speaker February 23, 2025 Phifer Nicholson**

Phifer Nicholson is a current general surgery resident at the University of California, Los Angeles. Prior to moving to Los Angeles, he studied medicine and theology at Duke University. It was while he was at Duke Divinity obtaining his theology degree when he met his now wife, Kiana, who herself is seeking ordination in the United Methodist Church. She is from California - her grandmother, Kikuko Kawamoto - is a longtime member of Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church! Phifer and Kiana currently live in Mid-City and, when not working in the church or hospital, can be found exploring the LA food scene, hiking, spending time with their cat, or enjoying new friendships.

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 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!

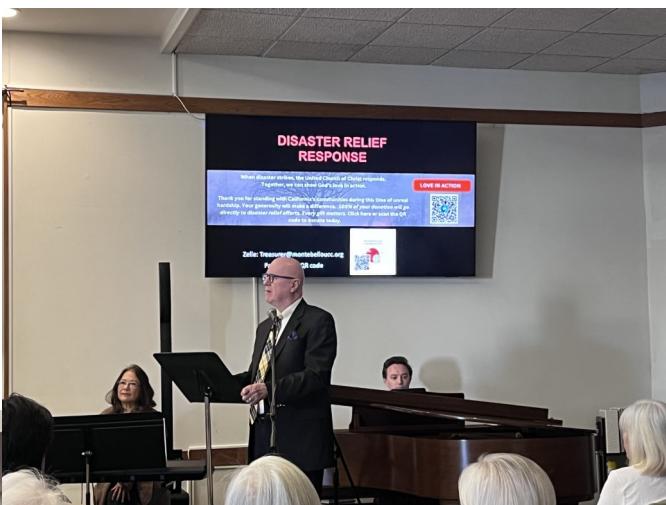




Last Month's Photos



Annual Mochitsuki January 5, 2025



On January 12, 2025 We hosted Altadena Community Church for a joint service. We had Rev. Dr. Paul Tellström and their music director Evan Griffith helped in our service since their church was affected from the Eaton fire. We were also joined by Rev. Rachael Pryor our new conference minister to be our guest speaker.



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1 Choir Practice @10am
			<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;">NOTE: Events marked with an asterisk (*) are private classes and not church events. Please contact the church office for more information.</div>			
2 Holy Communion C.E. Board Meeting @11:30am Jesus Reigns Child Support Offering	3 *Japanese Class @2pm	4 Bible Study @10am	5 Wednesday Group @8am *Dance Class @7pm	6	7	8 Choir Practice @10am
9 Diaconate/Trustees Meeting @11:30am	10 *Japanese Class @2pm	11 Bible Study @10am	12 Wednesday Group @8am	13	14	15 Choir Practice @10am
16 Goodnews Due Council Meeting @11:30am	17	18 Bible Study @10am	19 Goodnews Mailing @9am *Dance Class @7pm	20	21	22 Choir Practice @10am
23 Guest Speaker Phifer Nicholson	24 *Japanese Class @2pm	25 Bible Study @10am	26 Wednesday Group @8am *Dance Class @7pm	27	28	

Coming in March 2025

4	Fat Tuesday Fundraiser
5	Ash Wednesday
29-31	Youth Mammoth Trip
30	One Great Hour of Sharing Collection

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

