



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

e-Newsletter

Date: December 9, 2020

● Pastor's Message

Dear Mānoa Valley Church,



A few weeks ago, we entered into the Advent season and as a congregation we began reflecting on Christ's coming (*Advent* originates from the Latin word *adventus* which in English translates to 'coming' or 'arrival'). During the first two weeks of this season, we focused on 'Hope' and 'Waiting'—in the weeks to come, we will focus on 'Joy' and 'Love'. In all this, we are reminded that we live in a story like no other—the

Christmas story, which involves the great mystery that the God of the universe, the One who created all things and rules over all things, loves us so much that He comes to be with us and calls us to be His beloved daughters and sons.

The Christmas story reveals that before we were born, before we did anything in our lives, either noteworthy or shameful, before we experienced anything in our lives, including any pain or hurt that we carry, we were beloved. Each of us belongs to God from all eternity. God loved us before we were born and He will love us after we die.

In the midst of the Christmas season, we lose sight of the story and we can get preoccupied and busy with countless things as we prepare for what we 'think' or 'want' Christmas to be. This year, with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Christmas season can seem even more complicated, maybe making us feel more hectic or more anxious or alone.

In the midst of your own experience, I want to invite you to be reminded that throughout Scripture, God explicitly tells us, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." This is a fundamental truth of our identity, and we see it most profoundly in the Christmas story. This is who we are, regardless of if we feel it or not. Each of us belongs to God from eternity to eternity. And our lives, including our current circumstances, the choices we make, the relationships we have, what we do with what we have been given are all an opportunity for us to say to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, "I love you, too."

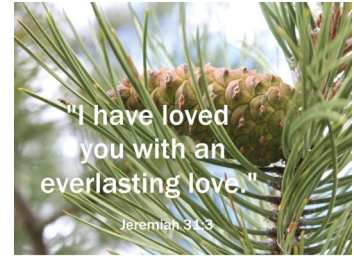
This Advent, may the LORD help us to let go of all that is in us that resists God's love for us and impedes us from experiencing Him, so that we may love God and love people more fully and wholeheartedly this Christmas.



This Advent, as a community, we will continue to come together for corporate worship on Sundays. We will also have a special online Christmas Eve service where we will come together as a church community and invite the greater community to join us, as we have each year, albeit, in a different way, to listen to and again be in awe of the Christmas story.

Bless you, this Advent. May Jesus Christ meet you in new and profound ways during this season of waiting for Him.

Pastor Abe



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● Moderator's Message

The year 2020 has been challenging and full of opportunities because of the pandemic. As I write this last message as Moderator, I need to express my gratitude for this opportunity to serve Mānoa Valley Church and God in this way! The MVC officers, committee chairs, and pastors have taken on a lot of responsibility in keeping the church running smoothly. It has been a pleasure working with them!



We have learned to adjust and figure out how to do things when face-to-face meetings and gatherings were unsafe. Thank goodness for technology and those who know how to use it! The Worship and e-newsletter Committees have kept us connected via technology, while the Deacons, Executive Committee, and others have worked the phone tree lines and snail mail to keep members connected and engaged as well. The Pastoral Care Committee was busy supporting Pastor Abe and his family settle in and organized meal donations when needed. Our Missions Committee continued to advocate for and serve the homeless through the Family Promise and Next Step Shelter programs and those in need through the food distribution program offered by Hawaii Meals on Wheels.

Our Finance Committee and Trustees have done their part maintaining our facilities and finances during this time. Of course, the Child Care Programs continued to run with the support of the Child Care Committee and our staff. Our Personnel Committee has worked hard to update appraisal forms, evaluations, and timelines and of course handle the hiring of Pastor Abe and David Park. Many members and friends have pitched in to serve MVC and God's mission! The Connection Groups initiated by Pastor Abe have provided additional fellowship to all who have internet. The need for a community assessment, started over a year ago, has taken on new life with organizations in the Stakeholders Group and Pastor Abe leading that initiative. Expect more to come from that group!



I am thankful for the opportunities we have had this year and feel confident as we transition under the able leadership of Roger Au and Pastor Abe that we will have an amazing 2021!

Dianne Ishida, Moderator

● A Multitude of Donations and Hard-Working Servers Make Next Step Shelter Dinner a Success

An outpouring of food donations from MVC members on Sunday, November 29th and the robust efforts of the Missions Committee and helpers created a feast for the residents and staff of Next Step Shelter in Kaka'ako. Around 150+ meals were served that included generous helpings of rice, chili, chicken, pulled pork, ham, pizza, and manapua, along with salad, fruit and cookies! As one of the servers,



Jim Brady, described, "They ate like kings and queens" and the hearty meal brought joy to both the recipients and the servers. It was also remarkable that a crew of ten volunteers (as seen in the photo) managed to serve so many people in a system with tight regulations due to coronavirus, which lengthened the process to well over an hour. We owe tremendous gratitude to people who donated food, leaders **Sue Yamamoto**, **Inga Park Okuna**, and **David Hirao** and the serving crew of **Jim Brady**, **Alva** and **Kent Yamaguchi**, **Neil Okuna** and daughter **Karina**, and **Ron** and **Kathy Lee** for pulling off such a major undertaking!



● MVC Supports Catholic Charities Christmas Project

To bring Christmas cheer to families, seniors, and adults facing financial hardship, the Missions Committee encourages MVC members to join in the effort to support Catholic Charities' *Holidays from the Heart* program.



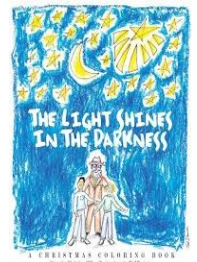
Here are ways you can contribute to this program:

- 1) Write a check to Mānoa Valley Church and write "Catholic Charities" in the memo line. Mail or drop off checks in the church mailbox next to the entry door to the gym by **Monday, December 14**
- 2) Buy a gift card and either drop off or mail to arrive at MVC office by **Monday, December 14**
If you'd like to drop it off in person, Missions Committee members will be at MVC on **Sunday, December 13 from 4:30-5:00 p.m.** to collect your donations.

Each gift card should be for \$20 to places such as Longs, Foodland, Walmart, Safeway, Target, Home Depot, Zippy's or McDonalds. And what would be fantastic is if you place the gift card in a Christmas card with a message of hope and cheer. Thank you, Mānoa Valley Church, for sharing God's love during this difficult year!

● UCC Christmas Fund Supports Ministers and Staff

Formerly called Veterans of the Cross, the UCC-sponsored annual year-end special Christmas Fund offering provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, and emergency assistance. Please consider supporting this effort by mailing in your check before December 20. On your checks made out to Mānoa Valley Church, please write UCC Christmas Fund on the memo line. Mahalo!



● News from Our Child Care Programs



Hallelujah! We want to report good news regarding staffing in both our Preschool and After School Care programs. We're pleased to welcome **Cherene Ridela** (pictured at left) who was recently hired by the Preschool to teach our 4-year-old class. Since she has broad experience teaching preschoolers, including those with special needs, she will be a valuable addition to our staff. Because of lower enrollment in our Preschool program caused by the pandemic, we have assigned teacher aide **Robin Yoshimura** (pictured below) to work with our ASC Program students. We now have 35 students enrolled in the program and online teaching experiences offered by Noelani and Manoa Elementary Schools, our ASC students have varied schedules. This situation has brought many challenges to our ASC staff who must adjust the program to meet the different needs of our keiki and families.

The Preschool is also preparing for an accreditation site visit from NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children) next year. The visit was set to take place in the fall but the pandemic delayed our plans so we are currently working with NAEYC to set a new date. Stay tuned for more news regarding this.



● In Memoriam



Kristen Carrie Laura

It is with great sadness that we announce the loss of **Laura Chritton Glenn**, mother to **Carrie** and **Kristen Glenn**. Laura passed unexpectedly last Thursday, peacefully in her sleep (non-COVID related). She was 61 years old and living a very happy life in North Carolina with her cousin, Elizabeth. Please keep Carrie, Kristen, and her family in your prayers. If you would like to care for the Glenn family, including providing a dinner this next week, please contact the church office and we will provide details on how you can help.

● Read a Book and Have a Conversation About it!



If you enjoy reading, MVC's Book Club is a Connection Group that you might consider joining. Look up the current selection and see if it's something that appeals to you. If you do read it, contact **Dianne Ishida** at dianne@hawaii.edu and ask her to send you the link to the meeting. You may have a pleasant, possibly amazing experience. Here's testimony from **Joanne Funasaki** about the benefits of Book Club: "I love getting together for Book Club sessions, love reading the suggested books that others share, and most of all, love seeing everyone!"

On November 29 the Book Club met to discuss *Daughter of Molokai* by Alan Brenner. This novel is a sequel to the popular book *Molokai* which the Book Club also read. Its story brought up such issues as Hansen's Disease and Kaulapapa, the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, and the challenges of being bi-racial and adopted. The conversation was lively and deep with participants referring to experiences and opinions related to these topics.

The Book Club's next selection for a February 21st Zoom meeting at noon is Jojo Moyes' novel *Giver of Stars*, which was nominated for Goodreads' Best Historical Fiction 2019. It features the Packhorse Librarians, a stalwart group of women who rode on horseback to deliver books to poor children in 1930s Kentucky. More to come on this novel in future newsletters.

● A Letter to Those Who Care About Their Health

Aloha MVC,

We just completed the first Nutrition & Health Connection Group!!! It was originally intended to be four weeks but ended up being six-weeks long. One of the participants, **Catherine Iwami**, said, "I learned a lot from David's passion and knowledge. Glad to know I'm on the right path to wellness. I'm making better meal choices and understanding calories and proteins to attain my personal goal. Thanks, David."



I wanted to lead this connection group in order to make the complicated subject that is nutrition more relatable to each person. I used to think that every time I read/researched something regarding nutrition, each "expert" would say something totally contradictory to some other "guru" and just made things way more confusing.

Nutrition & Health

Another participant, **Dianne Ishida**, wrote, "I appreciate David being able to speak in lay terms since the research and science can be daunting to those not used to scientific language, particularly in the health and nutrition areas. The information was understandable, there were opportunities to ask questions, and review helped solidify information. I believe David was able to cover the topic well to give us a greater understanding of how all aspects of our life—sleep, nutrition, and exercise—are connected with our well-being."

I love coaching people to be healthier and to become a better version of themselves. But I also feel that a lot of the information I know and use for coaching should actually be learned by everyone. I wanted to create a "platform" to help people actually learn and apply the information, knowledge, and skills without breaking the bank like a lot of health and fitness companies do. Trust me, I know...I used to work for a gym that charged \$200+ per session!!!

If you're interested in learning more about nutrition, how to apply it to yourself (and no one else!), and just connect with your community and grow together, please send me an email at davidhbpark@gmail.com or you can always contact me at the MVC office. I hope to start the second connection group session in the new year.



I truly believe that we are what we eat. Nutrition is one of the foundational pieces to our health (along with movement as well as sleep) and I hope to share my passion with more of you and maybe even help you become a better version of yourself in the near future!

Sincerely, David Park, MVC Office Administrator