



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

August 5, 2026

MVC's After School Care Program Enriched by New Playground

by Trisha Honda, Director

It is with great excitement that we begin another school year in our After School Care Program on August 3. This year, we have the privilege of serving **100 amazing children**.

Every afternoon, our classrooms become a place where children can finish homework, play, laugh, learn, and most importantly, experience the love of Christ. Our hope is that each child leaves knowing they are valued, encouraged, and loved by God.

We are especially excited about the new additions to our playground this year! The children will enjoy a **new balance beam**, an exciting **spinner**, and a **four-square court**. These new play features were added to encourage active play, build confidence and coordination, promote teamwork and friendship, and provide even more opportunities for children to have fun together. We know these improvements will quickly become favorite gathering spots where children can create lasting memories while developing physically, socially, and emotionally in a safe and welcoming environment.

Thank you to our church family for supporting this ministry through your prayers and encouragement. Your support allows us to make a lasting impact on the lives of children and their families. Because of your generosity, we can continue providing a nurturing, faith-filled environment where children can grow in their relationships with one another and with Christ.

Please keep our students, staff, and families in your prayers as we begin this exciting new school year. Pray that God will bless our program with safety, joy, and meaningful opportunities to share His love each day. We are looking forward to all that God has in store!



Links

[Online Donations](#)

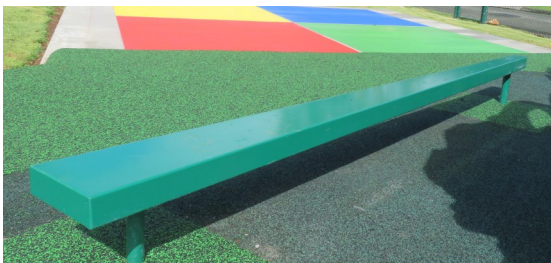
[Thought For The Day](#)



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Balance beam

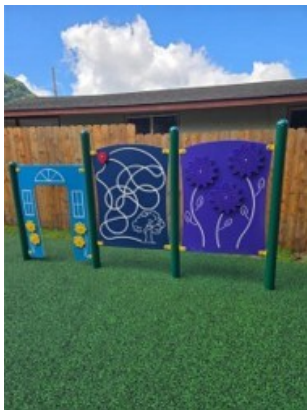


Four-square court

Spinner

New Preschool Playground Equipment

New playground equipment for the Preschool was installed this summer.



Back to School!

You're invited to a fun-filled evening for the whole family as we celebrate the start of a new school year! Whether you go to our Preschool or Afterschool Care, or are a part of our church family, join us for a delicious spaghetti-and-meatball dinner, exciting activities for children, and a special children's performance.

It's a wonderful opportunity to celebrate the children and connect with each other. We can't wait to see you there!

RSVP—use the QR code in the flyer or click the link at the bottom right of the flyer.

Dawn Hamada, Trisha Honda, Pastor Ruchama Joël

MĀNOA VALLEY CHURCH

BACK TO SCHOOL!

YOU'RE INVITED TO A FUN-FILLED EVENING FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY AS WE CELEBRATE THE START OF A NEW SCHOOL YEAR.

Friday **AUGUST 28**
5:30 pm - 8:30 pm
MVC Gym

RSVP



PROGRAM

- Welcome
- Dinner
- Children's Performance
- Family Activity
- Kids Activity
- Dessert Time

RSVP [LINK](#)

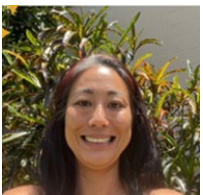
Introducing our Preschool Staff—2025-2026



Ms. Dawn, Preschool Director—Ms. Dawn is a faithful member of MVC and has served and provided leadership in our Preschool, Sunday School, and youth ministries.



Ms. Melissa –“I am a proud mom of four children, ages 25, 22, 17 and 13. They are my greatest joy and my proudest achievement. I have worked in early childhood education for 28 years and believe children learn best through play, exploration, and meaningful relationships.”



Ms. Patricia –“I come from a dental background of 25 years and have experience working with kids. I am a certified Childhood Development Associate. Kevin, my husband of 20 years, and I are blessed to have a daughter and son. My husband and children all went to Mānoa Valley Church Preschool, which is blessed with a loving family environment.”



Ms. Ying –“I was born and raised in China and moved to O‘ahu in 2019 with my daughter. We have loved living here ever since! I hold a bachelor’s degree in education and a master’s degree in psychology. Through the experience of homeschooling my daughter during kindergarten, I found my passion for early childhood education. I earned my Childhood Development certificate. I truly love working with young children and feel so grateful to be part of their early learning journey.”



Ms. Ai –“I was born and raised in Japan where I completed my bachelor’s degree in economics. I’ve been in Hawai‘i for 16 years. My children, ages 11 and 9, attended Mānoa Valley Church Preschool. I love going to the beach with them and my dogs.”



Ms. Kazue –“I was born in Japan and moved to Hawai‘i when I was 14. I attended Mid-Pac and the University of Hawai‘i, where I completed my bachelor’s degree in biology and a PhD in molecular biology. I have always enjoyed spending time with children and watching them learn and grow. I have two wonderful daughters who are now six and four years old and am fortunate to have the opportunity to work with children as a teacher’s aide at MVC Preschool.”



Ms. SherryAnn –“I was born and raised in Hawai‘i and am married with two beautiful children. I love to travel and have traveled halfway around the world. I have ten years of experience teaching and volunteering at the Honolulu Christian Preschool as both a lead teacher and an aide.”



Ms. Chris –“I have been a teacher’s aide for over 20 years, working at Star of the Sea Early Learning Center, the Honolulu Jewish Community Preschool, Queen Emma Preschool and Mānoa Valley Church Preschool. I come from a large family of seven boys and five girls ... ‘cheaper by the dozen!’ and have a daughter who is currently a kindergarten teacher.”

Pastor Abe's Message

"Practices of Grace"



Pastor Abe

Some years ago, at a church I was serving, Richard Foster was invited to speak at a conference we were hosting. Because I was one of the younger pastors on staff, I was "voluntold" to be his chauffeur for the week.

As a young pastor, I could hardly believe the opportunity I was being given.

For those unfamiliar with him, Richard Foster is arguably one of the most influential modern Christian writers on spiritual formation and the spiritual disciplines. His book *Celebration of Discipline* has helped generations of Christians rediscover ancient practices such as prayer, solitude, fasting, study, service, confession, and worship. Richard Foster is one of those rare figures who is respected across a remarkably wide range of Christian traditions. Whether someone comes from the United Church of Christ or a Baptist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Reformed, Methodist, or contemplative background, there is a good chance he has helped them think more deeply about life with God.

So, when I drove to the airport to pick him up, I was excited and a little nervous. As I waited for him to arrive at the baggage claim area, I imagined someone who might look like a desert monk or at least carry himself with the unmistakable gravity of a spiritual master.

Instead, I was met by a rather ordinary-looking man. He was a little out of shape, with graying hair and a ponytail that already seemed somewhat outdated. He looked less like a famous spiritual teacher and more like someone you might meet in line at the hardware store.

Over the next several days, I drove him between his hotel, the church, restaurants, meetings, and conference events. During those drives, we talked about theology, the state of the church, the books he had written, and the places he had traveled. I was grateful for those conversations.

But they are not the conversations I remember most.

What I remember are our discussions about where to find the best local favorite foods. I remember talking about what we were reading and what ideas had recently caught our attention. I remember sharing our frustrations and our dreams for the church. I remember a surprising conversation where he shared his thoughts on Christians and the practice of yoga.

Many of the subjects of those conversations were ordinary. Yet there was something about the way he inhabited those conversations that stayed with me. He was present. Curious. Unhurried. He did not seem to compartmentalize life into "sacred moments" and everything else. The same attentiveness he brought to prayer, theology, and Scripture was present when discussing restaurants, books, exercise, or the peculiarities of church life.

That week, over time, I began to understand that he had not written so powerfully about the spiritual life because he had escaped the ordinary. Rather, he strived to meet Jesus Christ within every part of life.

Years later, I served another church—one known for having some of the finest preachers and theological thinkers of our time serve as core leaders and come as guest preachers. Sunday after Sunday, I sat in that sanctuary amazed by the privilege of hearing sermons of extraordinary intelligence, beauty, and power.

And yet, outside of Sunday worship services, I sometimes watched committed church leaders quarrel over small matters. I saw people become passive-aggressive, territorial, petty, and surprisingly immature. These were people who had, for years, heard some of the best preaching available anywhere.



Don't get me wrong, I loved that congregation—they were my spiritual family. But my time there taught me something I have not forgotten.

Preaching matters deeply. The proclamation of the Gospel is one of the primary ways we encounter the Good News of Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ Himself. A sermon can awaken faith, comfort the grieving, disturb the complacent, and help us see God and ourselves more clearly.

But hearing a great sermon does not guarantee spiritual growth and maturity.

We may leave a worship service inspired . . . and still speak impatiently to our family on the drive home. We may understand grace theologically . . . and remain unable to extend it to someone who irritates us. We may love a sermon about forgiveness . . . and spend the week rehearsing an old resentment.

As I reflect back on close to three decades in ministry, I've come to realize that spiritual maturity is usually formed in less dramatic places. It is shaped through the slow, sometimes tedious work of learning to pay attention to Jesus in the life we are actually living. It grows as we pray when our prayers feel dry, serve when no one notices, and forgive when we would rather remain offended and resentful. It comes during the times we choose to be quiet enough to hear what is happening within our own souls.

This was a large part of the reason why we have begun our new sermon series, “Practices of Grace: Learning to Live with Jesus.” During these next months, we will explore various spiritual disciplines and hear from different people about the ways these practices have shaped their lives.

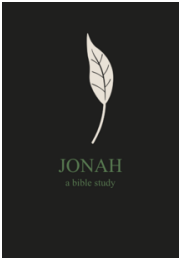
These disciplines are not techniques for earning God’s love. They are ways of making room to receive the love already given to us in Jesus Christ. They train our attention. They help us recognize that Jesus is not only present in the sanctuary, the sermon, or great spiritual experiences. He is also present at the breakfast table, in traffic, in difficult conversations, in quiet disappointments, and in the long stretches of life that appear to be nothing special.

I am convinced that this is where grace does some of its deepest work. Not only in the extraordinary moments that take our breath away, but in the ordinary moments when Jesus patiently teaches us how to slow down and breathe.

My hope is that throughout this sermon series, these practices will help us do more than learn about Jesus. My hope is that they will help us live with Him, until little by little, by His grace, His life becomes visible in ours.

Christ’s Peace, Abe

Explore the Bible by Pastor Ruchama Joël



I’m excited to invite you to *Explore the Bible*, a Bible study designed to help you grow in confidence as you engage with God’s Word. If you’ve ever found the Bible difficult to read, confusing, or even a little intimidating, you’re not alone. This Bible study is for you and for anyone who wants to better understand Scripture. Together, we’ll learn five simple and practical steps to explore the Bible and discover its meaning. I hope you’ll join us as we learn, ask questions, and grow together.

The sessions will be held on the following Wednesdays and there is a morning group or an evening group.

08/12	08/19	08/26	09/02	09/09
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Morning Group (9:00 am - 11:00 am)

Evening Group (7:00 pm - 9 pm)

Please send an email to ruchama@manoavalleychurch.org to sign up.

Serving Together at IHS: Catching a Vision by Pastor EJ Ravago

On Saturday, July 25, eleven members of our church family had the privilege of serving at the Institute for Human Services (IHS). After two previous tours of the facility, this was our first opportunity to roll up our sleeves and serve alongside the staff and residents. It was a day filled with meaningful work, encouraging conversations, and a growing sense that God is shaping something in our church.

Our team spread out across several projects. Some built new planter boxes while others cleaned and refreshed existing gardens, helping create welcoming outdoor spaces for residents. Others organized the library and sorted clothing donations, ensuring valuable resources would be ready for those who need them. As rewarding as the projects were, the people were the highlight. Throughout the day, we had the opportunity to meet staff and residents, talk story, share a few laughs, and hear pieces of their journeys. Those moments reminded us that ministry is never just about completing a task list. It is about seeing people as our neighbors—each with a story, each deserving of dignity, compassion, and hope.

Another unexpected gift was simply serving together. There is something special about working side by side that deepens relationships in ways few other activities can. Between projects, conversations flowed naturally, new friendships were formed, and our team left knowing one another a little better. As we sought to bless others, God was also strengthening our own church family.

A few weeks ago, we reflected during Worship on Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan. We considered not only the compassion of the Samaritan, but also the quiet faithfulness of the innkeeper. The Samaritan rescued the wounded man, but the innkeeper provided the ongoing care that allowed healing to continue. Both were essential participants in God's work of restoration. That image continues to shape our vision for community engagement. Sometimes we are called to respond in moments of immediate need like the Good Samaritan. At other times, we are invited into the slower, steady work of the innkeeper, creating spaces where healing and hope can flourish over time. Our growing partnership with IHS is helping us embrace both callings. After two tours and now this volunteer day, we believe we're beginning to catch a vision for what this could mean for our church. Rather than simply serving from a distance, we're learning, listening, building relationships, and discerning how God might use us to faithfully support the work already taking place at IHS. This isn't just about one Saturday of volunteering. It's about becoming a church that consistently loves its neighbors in practical, relational, and Christ-centered ways.



Reggie Tamashiro and Evie Gallagher worked on planters.



MVC members volunteered at IHS.

Thank you to everyone who gave their time, energy, and willing hands on July 25. We left tired, grateful, and inspired. More importantly, we left with a greater love for one another, a deeper appreciation for the ministry of IHS, and an even clearer vision of where God may be leading us together.

Mahalo and Salamat.

Foodland's Give Aloha Program

The Foodland Give Aloha program is coming in September. This is your chance to help the Legacy Fund. With so many large maintenance projects happening this year, we need your help even more. Foodland will match a portion of your donation, so your gift can grow by more than 20%. Details about the program will be in the September.



MVC Hiking Club Is Back! By Pastor EJ Ravago

We're excited to restart the church's hiking club (established in 2011), where we hiked approximately 67 different hikes on the island of O'ahu! Last month, we did a sample hike to get it started and hiked the beautiful *Crouching Lion Trail* in Ka'a'awa, on the Windward coast.

If you would like some great fellowship, exercise, and views around the island, our next hike is set for ***Makapu'u Lighthouse Trail*** [LINK](#) on Statehood Day, **Friday, August 21, 2026**. Meet there at 8:00 am, or by 7:15 am to carpool from Mānoa Valley Church.

For each hike we will give you an idea of how difficult it may be. The scale ranges from 1 (easy-beginner)) to 5 (difficult-advanced). We rate Makapu'u a 1.5. It is around 2 miles roundtrip. After we meet there and pray, there will be two options:

- 1) Hikers may take the easier paved path all the way to the top or
- 2) Hikers can walk up to Makapu'u Point, just up the street, and take the more strenuous route up on the cliff side, which is not too dangerous. We will all meet at the lookout at the top, and walk down the easier paved path together.

We recommend bringing water and maybe some snacks, applying sunscreen, and wearing a hat and a good pair of shoes.

Before joining a hike, each participant must have a completed waiver on file. More information will be provided soon. If you have any questions, contact Pastor EJ at ejravago@manoavalleychurch.org

In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him.

The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.

Psalm 95:4-5

Lead Together

Meaningful community doesn't just happen on Sundays—it grows through relationships all week long. Join us on **August 9 at 12:00 PM** in the Multipurpose Room as we share the vision for Connect Groups and explore how we can build a stronger, more connected church from Sunday through Saturday. Whether you're currently leading a group or interested in leading one, we'd love for you to be part of the conversation! Please contact Pastor Ruchama at ruchama@manoavalleychurch.org or sign up after the worship service.



Family Promise Program



We will be bringing dinner to the Family Promise Program on Thursdays August 13 and September 3, 2026. If you are able to contribute a dish, fruits, rice, veggies and/or dessert for 5 or more people (no pasta please) you can sign up using these links. August 13 [LINK](#) and September 3 [LINK](#). If you have questions, please contact Inga Park Okuna at ingaparkokuna@gmail.com.

When we provide food for the Family Promise families, we are fulfilling Jesus' commandment to feed the hungry and thus share from our bounty.

Rose Niimoto and her pet dog, Estrella donating a meal.



Pastor EJ, Javier Carrazco, Sam, Joy and Gio Browning enjoyed the hike.

HARVEST FAIR



Saturday, November 7, 2026

9:00 am-1:00 pm

Breezeway and Gym

Chair : Richelle Fujioka
(richelle.fujioka@gmail.com)

Volunteers needed! Please look over this list and contact the booth leader now! Also, if you can help set up on Friday, November 6 from 5-8 pm, contact the booth chairs.

Booth	Contact Person	Help Needed
Art	Sue Yamamoto susan-yamamoto@outlook.com Cat Iwami catz@hawaii.rr.com	
Baked Goods	Louise Yamamoto (808) 807-5577 yamamoto-louise007@gmail.com Catherine Miyahira (808) 256-1174	Calling all bakers and goody makers! We need all types of baked goods i.e. cookies, cakes, pies, breads, snacks such as prune mui, pretzels, granola, energy bars, etc. Cakes, pies, breads, and more perishable items will be accepted <u>only on the day of the Fair</u> . All other items that can last for a week like cookies, prune mui, etc. can be dropped off the Sunday before. Please let Louise know if your items will need <u>packing</u> and indicate if items have nuts in them.
Beverage & popcorn	Pastor Abe & Ron Lee pastor@manoavalleychurch.org	Helpers needed at Harvest Fair to serve drinks and popcorn.
Craft/Gift Shop	Bette Uyeda (808) 988-4990 auyeda001@hawaii.rr.com	Calling all crafters and those who enjoy sewing! We need new craft or sewing items that you can donate to our Gift Shop. Call Bette Uyeda at (808) 988-4990 or email at auyeda001@hawaii.rr.com for more information on how to donate or help in other ways.
Food	Reggie Tamashiro (808) 208-6971 r2tamashiro@hawaiiantel.net	Helpers needed on Friday, Nov. 6 from 11:00 am to help cook. Helpers also needed to prepare and sell food items at the Harvest Fair.
Hot Dogs	Ron Iwami lwamih001@hawaii.rr.com	Two volunteers needed on day of the Harvest Fair to help cook and package hot dogs.
Kiddie Games	Trisha Honda asc@manoavalleychurch.org	Monetary donations welcome to cover the cost of prizes and lunch for the student workers.
Plants	Dianne Ishida (808) 425-1729 Maizie Okimoto (808) 988-6216	We welcome potted plant donations! Also, helpers wanted on Friday morning from 9-noon to help set up and on Saturday during the Fair. If you have plants to donate or can work, please contact Dianne Ishida.
White Elephant	Sam Browning mrsammyjb@gmail.com	Helpers needed to sort donated items during October. Helpers also needed to sell items at Harvest Fair. More info to follow shortly about item donations—what and when!

UCC Special Offering

Mānoa Valley Church has for many years supported our mission by being a United Church of Christ “5 for 5 Church”. Being 5 for 5 means that our church encourages donations to the following five UCC-sponsored funds:

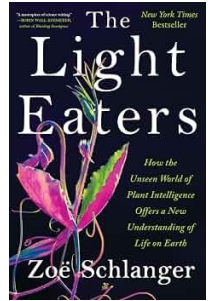
Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM)	One Great Hour of Sharing	Strengthen the Church	Neighbors in Need	The Christmas Fund
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On **Sunday, August 16**, you have a chance to join in by donating to OCWM. This fund makes it possible for our Conferences and National Ministries to strengthen local churches and leaders in various ways such as through leadership initiatives and congregational vitality work. Write your check to Mānoa Valley Church and on the memo line write OCWM. Thank you for seeing the big picture and helping the wider mission!

Book Club Selection Reveals Extraordinary Features of Plants

MVC’s Book Club connection group invites people interested in botany, gardening, or nature to read our next selection, *The Light Eaters* by Zoë Schlanger. It offers a radically new view of plants and how they have intelligence and agency to survive. One example is how corn plants can identify the caterpillar munching on it and send out chemical signals to attract predators which come and eliminate the threat by feeding on it!

This book is available at the Hawaii State Library in hardcover, eBook and audiobook form. Join the discussion on Zoom on September 20th at 1:00 pm. To receive the link, email **Richelle Fujioka** at richelle.fujioka@gmail.com.



Evacuation Drills will Continue at MVC by Roger Au



Mānoa Valley Church has adopted the “Avoid-Deny-Defend” strategy to help protect us against Active Threats. This method was recommended by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Homeland Security, Honolulu Police Department, and our Insurance Board. According to this strategy, our first line of defense during worship in the sanctuary is to *avoid the threat by evacuating*. The ability to

evacuate quickly is critical to surviving an active threat.

In such a scenario, worshippers should use the nearest exit *away from the threat*. For example, if the threat is entering from the east or parking lot side, people should exit to the west or Haawale Place. Evacuation should be rapid with personal belongings being left behind.

For people attending worship, drills to practice emergency actions will continue monthly, immediately after the service. In addition to evacuations, we will also review and practice “Deny and Defend” strategies.



Date	Event
Aug. 13 and Sept 3	Family Promise dinner donations, 5-5:30 pm, church parking lot.
Aug. 16	OCWM offering will be received.
Aug. 21	Hiking Club, Makapu‘u Lighthouse Trail, 8 am.
Aug. 21	Hawai‘i Admissions Day Holiday, office closed
Aug. 28	Back to School event, 5:30–8:30 pm, MVC Gym.
Aug. 30	Senior Ministry to provide snacks.