



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

February 4, 2026

Pastor Abe's Message

"The Small Stories That Hold Us"



Pastor Abe

It's February, and I know we're "supposed" to have moved on from Christmas. But I keep finding myself stuck there in the best way, especially as we spend the next few months in the Gospel of John. I find myself circling back to one of John's first lines: "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (John 1:14). One of my former seminary professors, Eugene Peterson, paraphrased it, "He moved into the neighborhood." And once you hear it that way, it's hard

to forget.

It tells us something about how God tends to work.

God doesn't usually show up with trumpets or headlines. He doesn't overwhelm us with spectacle or big displays. He comes the way love comes: up close, unforced, patient. He meets us in real life, at a pace our hearts can handle.

And that matters, because the larger story happening around us can eclipse the smaller stories of everyday life. War keeps grinding on. The news cycle keeps shouting. Even here at home, the last few weeks have surfaced fresh pain and division around immigration, belonging, and the use of power. If we're honest, many of us are tired. Not just tired in our bodies. Tired in our souls.

But what I'm learning, and what I saw again and again in 2025, is this: often, the small things are the real story.

A group gathering to pray. A hard conversation after worship. A person kneeling down to make a child feel safe. A meal quietly dropped off. A text that says, "I'm here." These aren't footnotes to the real action. In Jesus' Kingdom, these are the action.

One of the holiest rhythms I witnessed our community practice last year was coming together to pray. Sometimes it was for a major health crisis. Sometimes it was for discernment, direction, peace, or a need in the church. We brought our worries and hopes to Jesus. And in ways we can't fully explain, that time in prayer mattered. Not because we said the "right" words, but because we showed up. And Jesus showed up, too.

That's part of what it means to follow Jesus in our increasingly frantic world. We are learning to live in step with Jesus, which often sets us at a different pace than the urgent, loud, chaotic stories trying to press themselves on us. As we pay attention to the smaller stories, Jesus teaches us steadiness, presence, and calm courage rooted in love. Over time, it forms a person. It forms a church. And that kind of life can't help but spill into those around us.



Links

[Online Donations](#)
[Thought For The Day](#)

 [Like on Facebook](#)

 [Follow on Instagram](#)



As we step into 2026, I'm hopeful for what God is cultivating in us: a deeper life with God that makes us more present, a wider life of mission, stronger care for one another, and a continued commitment to love our neighbors, even across the lines we tend to draw.

Here's an invitation for this month: notice the ordinary places where Jesus is at work in your life. Thank Him for it. And if you feel led, share it with someone. Over coffee. On a walk. In a quick text.

The big headlines will keep coming. But Jesus is still moving into the neighborhood.

With love, Abe

Moderator's Message by Roger Au



Aloha MVC 'Ohana,

There are so many exciting things on the horizon!

Thank you for your support during the recent discussions regarding the Pastor of Missions & Community Engagement and the Pastor of Discipleship & Community Life. These two additions are critical to our future growth and ability to better serve the community.

Roger Au

We are so fortunate to have many dedicated members who are willing to serve. Many thanks to **Warren Kunimoto**, Finance Committee chair, who also served as the Acting Treasurer, and **David Shimabukuro**, 'Treasurer Emeritus', who helped finalize our budget and financial reports for the upcoming Annual Congregational Meeting later this month.



Pastor Gwendolyn, at the last Stewardship Sunday, cited the Biblical example of 'the widow who gave it all'. While this message was focused on and urged financial offerings, giving of time and talent is needed and graciously welcomed! Our church founders adopted a practice of congregational determination, that we democratically choose our future. Please consider volunteering on our committees or one of several leadership positions that are vacant. The positions are Council Vice-Moderator and Secretary.

Invitation to Help a Worthy Cause



Kathy Lee with donations.

We will once again be bringing dinners to the parents and children in the Family Promise Program on Thursday, February 12 and March 12, 2026. The Family Promise Program has helped hundreds of families find safe and secure long term housing. We are so grateful for their program and the opportunity to help them make a difference for Hawai'i's most vulnerable: our keiki! Thank you to all who have joined us in supporting them! Your food donation can be a main dish, salad, fruit, rice, or dessert.

If you feel called to contribute something, please sign up using the links below. Bring your food to the church parking lot between 5-5:10 p.m. on the day you sign up for. Thank you, MVC 'Ohana for sharing God's love and blessings! If you have questions, contact Inga Park Okuna at ingaparkokuna@gmail.com

[2/12/26 SIGN UP LINK](#)

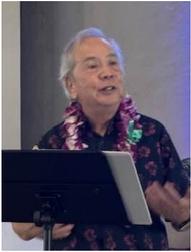
[3/12/26 SIGN UP LINK](#)

Annual Congregational Meeting is Around the Corner

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22
AFTER WORSHIP & A LIGHT LUNCH



Participants Vouch for the Value of Bible Study



Pastor Alan
Maeno
Photo by
Ron Hashiro

On Sunday, February 1st, worship featured **Pastor Alan Maeno**, whose association with Mānoa Valley Church dates back to 1986 when he served as Associate Pastor. Pastor Alan recently completed a 13-week long Bible Study entitled “Amazing Stories of Women in the Old Testament.” This connection group attracted numerous attendees, two of whom volunteered to share their impressions during Sunday’s worship.

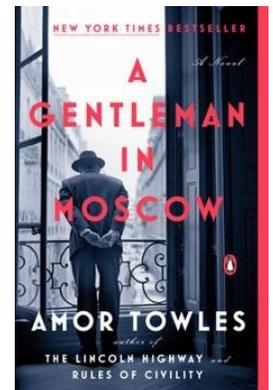
Susan Nishida, a relatively new member at MVC, said: “We ...learned the importance of these women and their relationship with God. It made me reflect on my own walk with God.” **Earl Yonehara**, the lone male in this group, said: “This was the first Bible Study [for me] that talked about women in the Old Testament. A common theme was the strength and courage of the women that helped build the Jewish faith and created the line that resulted in the birth of Jesus Christ.”

While she did not speak at Worship, **Mary Moccia** was a grateful participant who said, “This study really helped bring the women of the Old Testament alive. It was exciting to see how they bravely lived out their faith, and how God used them. For me, this study inspired me to be braver and more confident in standing firmly on God’s Word, especially in our culture that often seems hostile to Jesus. And, by studying these women, it helped me see more clearly that God uses ordinary people, like me! Very humbling and encouraging!”

Both Earl and Mary invited others to try Bible Study. Earl pointed out that this would be an area of focus for the newly appointed Pastor of Discipleship and Community Life. Mary added, “I really encourage others to pray about joining a Bible Study or Connection Group. It’s a safe place to explore and to grow in your faith. No pressure! You don’t even have to share; however, I love it when people do! Especially when someone shares their doubts or questions. That always strengthens my own faith.”

Book Club Invites You to Join Us

The Book Club’s next choice takes the reader to Russia during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1922 and in a smartly-crafted story, tells the (fictitious) tale of one member of the dethroned aristocracy who strives to preserve his lifestyle and dignity while under house arrest. The book is called *A Gentleman in Moscow*, written by Amor Towles. One online source says: “The book was a major bestseller, praised by critics and readers for its style, wit, and memorable characters, and was recommended by figures like Bill Gates and Barack Obama. The novel is praised for its charm, humor, and exploration of resilience, friendship, and the human spirit.”



It’s available through the Hawai’i State public library. The book club’s next planned meeting to discuss this work is Sunday, February 15, 2026 at noon, only on Zoom. If you’d like to join us, get the Zoom link from **Dianne Ishida** at dianne@hawaii.edu.



Date	Event
Feb. 12	Family Promise dinner donations, 5-5:10 pm, parking lot
Feb. 15	Book Club meeting
Feb. 18	Ash Wednesday
Feb. 22	Annual Congregational Meeting, after worship
Feb. 22	Child Care Committee to provide snacks