



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

October 7, 2026

Pastor Abe's Message

"A Ministry of Presence"



One of the privileges of being a pastor is being invited into moments of people's lives that are tender, difficult, and sometimes very holy.

A hospital room. A difficult diagnosis. Sitting with someone who is grieving. Walking alongside a caregiver who is tired.

Visiting someone who can no longer come to church as easily as they once did. Being with a family approaching the end of a loved one's life, or trying to find their way back to "normal" after someone they love has passed. Sometimes it is a sudden crisis. Other times it is a long season of loneliness, uncertainty, transition, or change.

And these experiences are not limited to any one generation. They are part of being human. They are present among our older members, but also among young families, people navigating work and relationships, caregivers, neighbors, and those connected to MVC through our Preschool, After School Care, Connection Groups, and other ministries throughout the community.

Behind every one of these situations is not simply a need to be met. There is a person to be loved, a story to be heard, a life in which God is already at work. And I find myself asking more and more: How is God forming us into a church that knows how to be present for one another?

Paul tells the church to "bear one another's burdens" (Galatians 6:2). That calling belongs not only to pastors, but to the whole body of Christ. **We are called to become a community in which people do not have to carry the difficult seasons of life alone.**

One way I have seen churches live into that calling faithfully is through **Stephen Ministry**.

I have served in churches that used Stephen Ministry and have seen the difference it can make in a community. *At its heart, Stephen Ministry equips members of a congregation to provide one-to-one Christian care to people walking through difficult seasons.*

A Stephen Minister is not a counselor and does not come with all the answers. They are trained to listen, pray, keep confidences, maintain healthy boundaries, and simply show up consistently. In many ways, it is a ministry of presence.

Some of the holiest moments I have experienced in ministry have come through exactly that kind of quiet presence. We sometimes imagine that we are going to bring Jesus into someone else's difficult circumstances, only to discover that He is already there. In caring for another person, we often encounter Jesus Christ ourselves.



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For the past year, I have been talking and praying with leaders at MVC about whether Stephen Ministry might be a good fit for our congregation. I am grateful that **Ruchama Joël, Louise Yamamoto, Alisa Au**, and I have now committed to taking the next step and will be trained as Stephen Leaders over the coming months.

Stephen Leaders help establish and guide the ministry, train and support Stephen Ministers, and thoughtfully connect caregivers with those seeking care. Our hope is to begin laying the groundwork for Stephen Ministry at MVC in the new year.

And that brings me to an invitation.

Some of you may feel something stirring as you read this. You may naturally notice when someone is hurting. You may be a good listener. You may know how to sit with someone without immediately trying to fix things. Maybe your own difficult seasons have given you a deeper compassion for others.

You do not need to have all the answers. That is not what we are looking for. Stephen Ministers receive significant training in listening, confidentiality, prayer, healthy boundaries, and caring for people through difficult circumstances. They also receive ongoing support. It is a real commitment because people and their stories matter.

But even more importantly, Stephen Ministry helps us recover something deeply Christian: caring for one another is the calling of the whole church.

If you feel that you might be called to become a Stephen Minister, please reach out to me, Ruchama, Louise, or Alisa. Reaching out does not mean you are signing up. We would simply love to hear what is stirring in you and discern together whether this ministry might fit your gifts and this season of your life. We hope to begin training our first group of Stephen Ministers sometime next year.



I also invite you to notice the people around you. Sometimes we recognize gifts in someone before they recognize them in themselves. Is there someone at MVC who is trustworthy, compassionate, a good listener, and able to be quietly present with others? Consider encouraging them to learn more about this ministry.

Most of all, please pray. Pray for Ruchama, Louise, Alisa, and me as we begin our training. Pray for wisdom as we prepare to launch this ministry. Pray for those who may be sensing a call to serve as Stephen Ministers.

And pray that God would continue to form us, Mānoa Valley Church, into a people who notice the relationships He places before us, who recognize the people entrusted to our care, and who are willing to join Jesus in loving the world He so deeply loves.

In Christ, Pastor Abe

All in the 'Ohana by Jennie Tamashiro

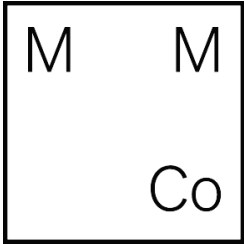
Super Agers in the MVC Congregation Are Amazing



Yoshio and Leatrice Yukinaga celebrated their **73rd** anniversary on June 27, 2026. Yoshio turned 103 on August 17 and Leatrice will be 99 in October. Their secret to longevity is simplicity, positivity, and their strong faith. Their minds are still sharp for people their age. Yoshio is currently under hospice care but is cared for at home by his daughter and her husband. Yoshio's infectious smile still touches the hearts of those who visit him.

MVC Receives Help in Planning Our Future by Richelle Fujioka

You may be familiar with Reverend **Josh Hayashi**, chaplain at Punahou School and occasional guest preacher at MVC. Having attended seminary in Vancouver, Canada with **Pastor Abe**, he has developed a close relationship with him and our church. Along with a partner, he also started a company called **Mission Management Company** (MMCo) that helps churches understand their current situation by providing data and analysis of various factors affecting their overall health.



Company logo

Recently, MMCo worked with MVC on a *Renewal & Revitalization Audit* looking at our financial health, organizational capacity, mission, community relationships, and use of our resources. As part of this role, Josh joined an MVC Council meeting and later sent a report in 2025. That report continues to be an important resource as we think about MVC's future. Following our church's consideration of and possible acceptance of a new governance model, the Board of Stewards model, Pastor Abe plans to revisit the report with the new Board of Stewards along with those who were invited to serve on a Renewal & Revitalization Review Team. Together, they will look more carefully at what we learned, the questions the report raises, and how those insights might help inform MVC's ongoing discernment about our mission, ministry, and future.

Since Josh is familiar with the customary practices at many churches in Hawai'i, he shares his personal insights in a blog. One, called **"Who Makes the Coffee in Ten Years?"** speaks of the tremendous care and effort exerted by certain older members to sustain a church due to their own sense of responsibility. It is particularly relevant to MVC. After reading it, Pastor Abe commented, "What especially spoke to me was his question, "Who's learning to notice what they notice?" It gets at something deeper than simply finding younger people to take over volunteer roles. It shifts the question from succession to discipleship and formation. We have people at MVC who have quietly noticed, cared for, and carried so much of the life of the church for decades. Part of our responsibility as leaders is helping another generation learn to see and care for the church in that same way."



Rev. Josh Hayashi

Here are the first two paragraphs of this blog. To see the entire piece, go to this [LINK](#).

"Somewhere right now, in a church you've probably never heard of, someone is doing something nobody will ever put in a church bulletin. She gets there forty minutes before anyone else, sets up the urn, sets out the cups, and makes sure there's decaf for the one man who can't have caffeine anymore. He arrives even earlier some weeks, unlocks the doors, checks that the walkway isn't icy, makes sure the building is safe before anyone else's child walks into it. When he finds someone asleep on the stoop, he doesn't call anyone or tell them to move along. He crouches down, wakes them gently, and invites them into the nine o'clock service, because as far as he's concerned, everyone is welcome. Someone else has quietly run the lay reader schedule for eleven years, the kind of task so unglamorous it never gets a title, just a person who simply never stopped doing it. Another shows up at the food bank on Tuesdays, not because a program assigned her there, but because showing up on Tuesdays is just who she has decided to be.

It's rarely as many separate people as a bulletin would suggest, either. More often, it's the same hands doing all of it. The same cup that held coffee on Sunday morning gets washed and set out again on a bitter Tuesday night for whoever walks in off the street looking for somewhere warm. The person who fills it after the nine o'clock service is very often the same person who fills it again for someone with nowhere else to be, because God's love doesn't stop on Sunday afternoon. It was always just the same task, offered to whoever needed it next."

Going Narrow and Deep: Our Partnership with Tutu Bert's Home by Pastor EJ

Over the past several months, the Missions Committee has been prayerfully discerning how MVC can best steward our time, energy, and resources. For this season, we've decided to go narrow and deep rather than wide and shallow by identifying Anchor Partners. These are organizations we can come alongside intentionally through consistent service and meaningful relationships. The Institute for Human Services (IHS) is one of those Anchor Partners. Through visits, tours, and opportunities to serve, we've been learning more about their work and more importantly, getting to know some of the people and communities they serve.

Now, that relationship is taking an exciting next step through our partnership with IHS's Tutu Bert's Home in Makiki, a respite home for our houseless neighbors who are recovering from surgery and other medical needs. In many ways, Tutu Bert's reminds us of the inn in Jesus' story of the Good Samaritan: a place where those who are hurting can find rest, care, and space to recover.

But a meaningful partnership requires more than an occasional event. It requires people. We're looking for volunteers who want to grow in their faith through service and who have a heart for our neighbors.

For the next six months, we'll pilot a simple plan with one opportunity each month, alternating between:

Work Days — landscaping, cleaning, and helping care for the home. We'll need about 4–8 volunteers.

Dinner Nights — preparing and sharing a meal with 10 residents, sitting around the table, and talking story. We'll need up to 5 volunteers.

Some months we'll serve with our hands; other months we'll gather around a table. The larger our volunteer team, the healthier our rotation can be, allowing us to share the opportunity without anyone feeling like they need to serve every month. Our hope is to build a ministry that we can sustain for the long haul, continuing to show up with energy and enthusiasm.

Here's our schedule for the first six months. Dates are subject to change:

October 10 — Work Day	November 18 — Dinner Night	December 12 — Work Day
January 20 — Dinner Night	February 13 — Work Day	March 17 — Dinner Night

Opportunities like these don't come along every day. IHS has invited us into the life of this home and into relationship with the people who stay there. Let's steward that invitation well and join God in what He is already doing in our neighborhood. Mahalo and Salamat!

*Interested in getting involved or simply want to learn more? Contact **Pastor EJ** at ejravago@manoavalleychurch.org or catch him in person!*



Leila, Resident Assistant, and Bernie, Community Programs Manager sharing some of the challenges and joys of life at Tutu Bert's

MVC Preschool Gets Off to a Great Start

Since the school year started for the children at MVC Preschool, they have been involved in numerous fun and enriching activities. As early as September 14, 2026, grandparents were invited to a breakfast which, according to Preschool Director **Dawn Hamada**, acknowledges the “important role grandparents play in nurturing family, culture, and community. The gathering is more than a meal – it is a celebration of connection. Our keiki learn the value of honoring elders, showing gratitude, and recognizing the generations who came before them. We pray that this morning fills our kupuna with joy and reminds them how deeply they are loved.”

Next, it was on to the wider community in the form of a visit from the Honolulu Police Department (HPD). Officers from HPD talked to the Preschool classes in mid- September and explained their role in the community while sharing safety tips and ways for children to seek help when needed.



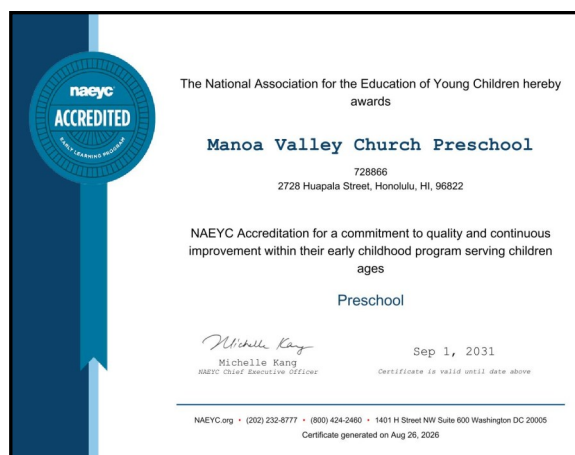
Finally, on September 19, the children were treated to a performance from Honolulu Theatre for Youth that demonstrated and encouraged them to explore storytelling, use their imagination and express themselves through movement.

MVC Preschool Receives Reaccreditation

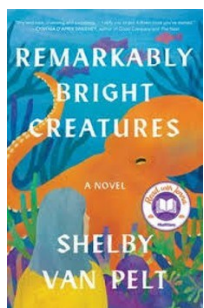
Mānoa Valley Church Preschool has been officially reaccredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This achievement reflects continued commitment to excellence in early childhood education and dedication to maintaining the highest national standards for quality, safety, curriculum, and family partnership.

During the reaccreditation review, the Preschool program demonstrated strong alignment with all ten NAEYC standards including teaching practices, assessment of child progress, health and safety procedures, staff competencies, and leadership and management systems. The final results affirm the strength of our program, the professionalism of our staff and the supportive partnership of our families and church community.

Preschool Director **Dawn Hamada** reported the reaccreditation to the families, saying, “Your collaboration and trust allow us to continue providing a nurturing, developmentally rich, and Christ-centered environment for every child in our care.”



MVC Book Club Invites You



According to the *National Wildlife Federation*, octopuses are “believed to be quite intelligent—capable of learning, using tools, and remembering locations.” If you’re interested in the amazing octopus, the MVC Book Club invites you to read our next selection called *Remarkably Bright Creatures* by Shelby van Pelt.

This novel is available at the Hawaii State Library System in all formats. It’s a mere 368 pages. There is even a film based on the book which is currently streaming on Netflix and one of the main characters was portrayed by Sally Field, who won an Emmy award for it.



We plan to meet on November 15 at 1:00 pm on Zoom. Email richelle.fujioka@gmail.com if you’d like to join.

Hana Hou!

“The unselfish effort to bring cheer to others will be the beginning of a happier life for ourselves.” – Helen Keller



Mānoa Valley Church’s 54th Harvest Fair is about a month away and the Baked Goods booth is again seeking homemade food items to stock its tables. Anything homemade is never overrated but guaranteed to be consumed with gusto!

During past Fairs, the Baked Goods booth did well with homemade cookies, cakes, rice dishes, snack and energy bars, preserves, party mixes, granola, salad dressings, and more! Donors have been creative and we are therefore including delectables to become the “Baked Goods and Delectables Booth.”

And kudos to our donors. Over the years, several of our patrons have returned looking for specific culinary items that were offered at previous Fairs. And some food items, like Sarie’s rice dishes, and Monica’s party mixes disappear immediately.

Delivery options: You may drop off hardier items, like snack bars, preserves and sealed bags of cookies, as early as Sunday, November 1st at MVC’s breezeway. Or, you may deliver items on Friday, November 6th from 5:00-7:00PM. Finally, you may drop off perishable items, like rice dishes, on Saturday, November 7 beginning at 8:00AM.

Questions and suggestions may be directed to co-chairs **Catherine Miyahira** (cmiyahira@gmail.com) or **Louise Yamamoto** (yamamotolouise007@gmail.com)

Mahalo more than plenty!

Attention Plant Lovers!

Fall is the season to take stock of what’s been growing in your garden. If you find plants that you are willing to part with, please consider donating them to the Plant Booth for the Harvest Fair. No plant is too small! We’d prefer them in plastic or terra cotta clay containers and if you want to designate a price, write it on masking tape and affix it to the pot.

If you have many plants to donate, contact one of the Plant Booth chairs to arrange a pickup.

Dianne Ishida (dianne@hawaii.edu) or (808) 425-1729
Maizie Okimoto (maiziemoki@gmail.com) or (808) 255-9180
Alvin Fujioka (afujioka@aol.com) or (808) 391-9808



Otherwise, please bring your plants to the breezeway on Friday, November 6 anytime from 9:00 am till noon. Since it’s the first booth that fairgoers see, many linger to look over and purchase plants. Your donations are appreciated!

Mānoa Valley Church Supports Family Promise

The mission of Family Promise is to transform the lives of families with children in Hawaii facing homelessness by providing housing resources and support.



“God loves a cheerful giver.”
2 Corinthians 9:7

Family Promise volunteers on September 3rd are pictured above:
Inga Park, Mike Kasamoto, Susan Shiraki, Richelle Fujioka, Betty Mark and Kathy Sokugawa



Date	Event
October 8	Family Promise dinner donations, 5 pm, church parking lot.
October 10	Work Day at IHS’s Tutu Bert House in Makiki
October 18	Keauhou Sandwich Making, 9:00 am, Gym
October 25	Snacks—Pastoral Relations
October 31	Newsletter Deadline