



# Mānoa Connection

MĀNOA VALLEY  
CHURCH

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

July 6, 2022

## ● Pastor Abe's Message





We have just come out of a long weekend celebrating July 4<sup>th</sup>, a holiday intended to commemorate the unique time in our country's history when our country's leaders made a declaration that its citizens would no longer live under the British monarchy, and would instead live 'united', 'free', and 'independent' . . . And yet, 246 years later, as one reflects on our current events and all that is happening in our country, these adjectives might not be the first words that come to mind when describing one's current experience and the reality in which we live.



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'Hot button' topics like the ones swirling around our newsfeeds, social media posts, and our daily conversations are not new. That isn't to say that opinions on these issues don't matter and attempting to seek truth on these matters isn't important. Rather, I am aware that people likely fall on different sides of these issues for valid (and not so valid) reasons, and discussion here, on this platform, would do little to impact that.

Because of that, I want to focus instead on *who we are* amidst it all—Jesus Christ's church. More importantly, I want to focus on "*whose*" *we are*. We belong to Jesus Christ—we are people who follow, listen to, and are led by a Person—Jesus Christ.

It's probably healthy and wise for each of us to come to terms with the fact that regarding these issues, we are all likely right in some ways, "missed the boat" in other ways, and also have a lot of blind spots. Divisive issues are not something new to the church. Since its early days, Christian communities who were trying to follow Jesus Christ were confronted with complex issues that caused a divide. We read about this in the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome, where opinions on food laws and observing special days divided the community. It's here that the Apostle Paul points out a core truth for all Christian communities—following Jesus Christ has more to do with loving the other than it has to do with being "right". Paul writes this,



<sup>9</sup>Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. <sup>10</sup>Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. <sup>11</sup>Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup>Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." - Romans 12:9-18

These days, amidst all my questions and frustrations, Jesus continually brings my attention back to Him, specifically His incarnation. It's here that He reminds me, amidst all the complexities and nuances of life, of His heart—to be with us, to live among us, to die for us, to defeat death for us, and to offer us new life, everlasting life . . . all while we are still sinners. And it's here that we discover our call, to be that incarnational presence for others—this is a place where regardless of what group we identify with we must never be divided. Our call is to be present in ALL the lives of those we encounter. To be present with ALL people regardless of the choices they make each day, choices with which we may agree or disagree. And to do the difficult and good work of loving the other with God's love and to shine His light in the world.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to be many things— to be good citizens, good neighbors, decent people, seekers of truth . . . more than all, we are called to love . . . to be Love . . . to be Jesus' incarnational presence in our broken and divided world that God so loves. May it be so, Lord Jesus . . .

In Christ, Abe

● **Moderator's Message** by Roger Au



We send a hearty congratulations to Pastor Abe for successfully passing his examination for the Privilege of Call. The Oahu Association Committee on Ministry's unanimous approval at the Ecclesiastical Council paves the way for the Installation Service and Ordination ceremony later this year!

The Committee on Ministry noted that Pastor's paper "History and Polity of UCC" was so exceptional that it was distributed to the Council. The paper provides an 'overview of the core foundations of the UCC'. It starts with an explanation of the congregational tradition – "conviction to be doctrinally amorphous, intentionally choosing to refrain from adopting any fixed doctrine outside the core biblical doctrine of "one faith, one Lord, one baptism". The paper discusses four other 'threads' of the UCC and we'll post it later.

*Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music (Psalm 98:4);  
Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. (Psalm 100).*



Live music (click this link to hear the Praise Band) again fills the sanctuary! We are thankful to the Praise Band for sharing their talents and volunteering their time! Returning musicians include singers **Karen Hamada, Ron Hashiro, Lisa Miyamoto, and Leah Young**. Instrumentalists are **Stephen Hong, Ruth Komatsu, Neil Okuna, and Reggie Tamashiro**. We are especially thankful for Stephen, who has also volunteered to lead the group. Stephen brings a repertoire of new music and his previous experience leading praise worship. **Sam Browning, Shayna Doi, and Justin Lui** are anticipated to rejoin the team soon!

We are joyful for the extension of community support through the Missions Committee. Chairperson **Sue Yamamoto**, members **Kathy Lee, Evie Gallagher, and Melanie Ching**, along with **Inga Park-Okuna**, developed our new policy and process to ensure that any grants provided are in alignment with our mission. The monthly Missions Moments speakers, including Connie Mitchell and Ray Uehara provide us with feedback on the valuable impact to the community of your generous donations. Read about the impact of the grants that the Missions Committee has awarded to various nonprofit agencies on page 5.

● **Parking Lot Closure**



The MVC parking lot will be closed starting Monday, July 18<sup>th</sup> through Saturday, July 30<sup>th</sup> for repairs to the Preschool roof and the resurfacing of the parking lot. The gym will remain open for business with access from Haawale Place. **The lot will be open for Worship services on Sundays.**

● Marilyn Payapaya Says Aloha to MVC



After 22 years serving as our Preschool Director, **Miss Marilyn** is retiring at the end of July. She leaves her position knowing that she has made a difference in the lives of the many children and families she has served in our Preschool. Marilyn says her mother once told her...*if you find a job you love, you will never have to work a day in your life.* She agrees and feels she has had the best job in the world taking care of all the families who entrust the care and education of their children to our Preschool.

During her tenure at MVC, Marilyn has overseen the growth and development of our program. Her crowning achievement was meeting requirements for accreditation from the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** in 2022. The process took over three years of working with NAEYC representatives to verify the school met all requirements regarding curriculum, staff, class management, facilities, and administrative oversight. NAEYC accreditation is a major step in elevating our program and offering children a quality preschool experience including educational, physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual development. To her credit, Marilyn and her staff achieved all this while meeting safety requirements for COVID and keeping our Preschool open during the pandemic.

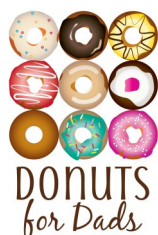


Marilyn looks forward to her retirement years. She plans to travel, visit her grandchildren, do some volunteer work, and enjoy relaxing at the beach. Although she states that she *had the best job in the world* at MVC, she looks forward to what God has in store for her as she retires. We wish her well as she steps forward into the next chapter of her life. The Church will say *aloha* to her on July 31 at our Youth Sunday worship service. Join us to wish her well as Marilyn enters this exciting chapter of her life...retirement!

● Congratulations, Preschool Class of 2022!



● Preschool Celebrates Father's Day





● **Evelin Tai Finds a Place at Mānoa Valley Church** by Richelle Fujioka



Newly-hired Pastor of Children and Family Ministries **Evelin Tai** has journeyed far both geographically and spiritually to find her way to our little “church in the valley.” Born and raised in New York City to immigrant parents from Taiwan, she earned a bachelor’s degree at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later on, a master’s degree at Columbia University, both in economics. In between, she attended Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary where she pursued a master’s degree in social ethics, so that she could gain a Christian perspective on economic policy and development.

College was also where Evelin met her future husband. For her and Earl, married life first consisted of raising two children in New Jersey. But little did they know that they were soon to start an amazing journey. They always had a desire to help underserved populations and were provided the opportunity when Earl received a summer grant to do research in China. Shortly after arriving, their family met a hospitalized child with medical needs and agreed to be her guardian. Within a month, their bond was so strong that they felt committed to this girl, but it would take a return to China and seven more years to finalize the adoption.

While in China, Evelin availed herself of various opportunities ranging from volunteering at her children’s schools, to becoming the director of the Baobei Foundation, a non profit which provides medical care to Chinese orphans and vulnerable children suffering from life threatening birth defects. Not only did she gain notable administrative skills, she was privy to a life-changing experience which she explained in a video. Click on this [LINK](#) to hear Evelin’s moving speech on the “preeminence of love.”

We at MVC are fortunate that Evelin possesses the capacity to perceive need and the readiness to address it, especially in terms of children. This trait was recognized by friends in New Jersey who recommended that she serve on the board of Mustard Seed School, a Christian K-8 school. Evelin also helped found the Grace and Peace Preschool to develop a Christ-centered program for the youngest of students. Her own decision at five years old to follow Jesus led her to a lifelong belief that we should provide children with the opportunity to know Christ from a young age.



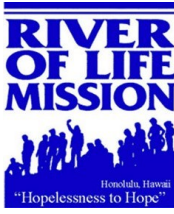
In a letter of introduction to the Council, Pastor Abe stated, “Evelin loves Jesus Christ and loves people, especially children. Her faith in Jesus is moving, as she is willing to go wherever Jesus calls her to use her gifts, strengths and passions and be a servant leader.” In her short time at MVC, Evelin has already felt welcomed and is grateful for the kindness and trust shown to her. She would be happy if MVC members introduce themselves to her and her family—husband Earl and children Karis (24), Elijah (22) and Ana (15). Please pray for her as she takes on the huge job of overseeing and interweaving our Preschool, ASC, and Sunday School programs.



Since beginning her work at MVC, Evelin has spent time meeting and getting to know the children and parents in our child care programs. A major part of her responsibilities as the Pastor of Children and Family Ministries is to connect our child care families with the ministry of MVC and encourage their participation in our many programs and activities. Evelin is also working with Marilyn, our preschool teachers and the After School Care Program staff to ensure a smooth transition as Marilyn retires and other staff changes occur. It is a time of change but we look forward to the new school year.

● **News from the Missions Committee**

Jesus calls us to be *the salt of the earth and the light of the World*. The Missions Committee has carried out this commandment by awarding grants this year in the amount of \$43,800 to 22 organizations that serve the most vulnerable people in our community. These agencies have told us how much these grants assist them to feed the hungry, house those without shelter, and offer support services to those who need a helping hand. Read their expressions of appreciation and renew your commitment to live out Jesus' commandment.



**River of Life Mission:** We are so privileged to partner with you to provide a “home” for the homeless who visit the Mission. Thousands of meals are distributed weekly throughout Oahu...Your \$1,125 donation ...makes it possible. Your faithfulness does make a huge impact in the lives of those who are needy and alone. Thank you very much!

**Waikiki Community Center:** Thank you so much for your generous award for our emergency food pantry...WCC’s food pantry clientele includes those from our kupuna and keiki programs, through which we serve seniors in need and low to moderate income families. Mahalo nui for your assistance.

**The Institute for Human Services:** Mahalo for your generous gift of \$500...Your gift truly makes an impact. In the last ten years alone, we have served over 3 million meals and sheltered over 17,000 people. Together we help those in need to rebuild their lives and shape new beginnings.

**Hawaii Foodbank:** As many Hawaii families continue to get back on their feet, Hawaii Foodbank will help make sure they have meals on the table—and it’s because of your help.

**Family Promise of Hawaii:** Because of you, we can provide so much hope! After receiving assistance from our programs, a family had this to say: *Truly grateful for Family Promise. Thank you for taking me and my son in and giving us this chance at a better and brighter future.*

**UCC Transition House:** With the funds the church provided, the Transition House will be much brighter and cooler with the new fans and light...please accept our sincere mahalo for your gift...to support and nurture these families while they strengthen themselves to assimilate back into society without violence in their lives.



● **MVC Provided Sandwiches for Next Step Shelter on June 26**

