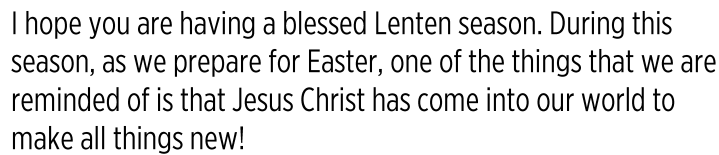




Connecting our 'ohana

Date: March 3, 2021

Dear Mānoa Valley Church,



I want to give a special thanks to all those who participated in the survey. We had 57 people from the MVC community complete the survey, which is encouraging, especially considering the length of the survey! On behalf of the church, I want to express our gratitude for your service.



[Follow on Instagram](#)

**See Appendix A to read full responses

Though some of the data collected in the survey was quantitative (e.g. demographic information), a majority of the data was intentionally meant to be qualitative. The reason for this is that the data was not intended to ‘prove a point’ or push a particular agenda, but rather to create a safe space where the MVC congregation could voice their thoughts and opinions and the community could listen and learn from one another. The hope is that the survey will give us a glimpse of the primary concerns, thoughts, emotional states, and convictions of the people who gather as God’s people at Mānoa Valley Church. In turn, we hope this information will help our congregation

better understand who we are and how we are called to care and pray for the church and greater Mānoa community.

This survey is just one of several key elements in the Strategic Planning Process. Other key elements include the church leadership re-exploring and re-evaluating key elements of the church (e.g. identity, purpose, mission, vision, values), as well as results from a community needs assessment survey that is currently being finalized and prepared to be distributed to the greater Mānoa Valley community and people connected to Mānoa Valley.

The overall goal and aim of all of these surveys, discussions, and processes is to explore and strive to better understand who we are as a church and what we are called to do and be as God's people in this particular time and place, so that God would be glorified as people encounter Jesus Christ, experience His love, and grow in their relationship with Him through Jesus Christ's Body and Bride, Mānoa Valley Church.

What an exciting time and season in the life of Mānoa Valley Church. Thank you all for your participation and prayers through this process.

In Christ,
Pastor Abe

● Moderator's Message by Roger Au



We are blessed to live in Hawaii! We can be thankful that Honolulu is successfully progressing in our fight against COVID and has moved to the less restrictive Reopening Strategy Tier 3. Spiritual services are allowed, but we must continue to abide by safety protocol, including social distancing and mandatory mask wearing. The Worship Planning and Trustees Committees will continue to review and assess the virus situation carefully; we want to be cautious to protect our members and friends. Nevertheless, we are buoyed as more people become vaccinated and we move toward herd immunity.

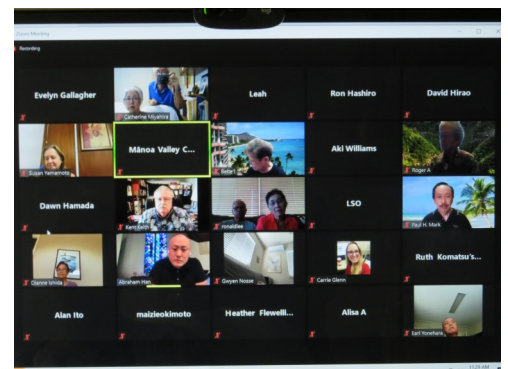
The Ash Wednesday Services (See page 4 for more on the services.) brought a special warmth and an anticipation to the return to live worship. But it also displayed the need for additional volunteers to help keep us safe. While the Youth have been instrumental in supporting the real-time video and recorded services, returning to live worship will require several additional people each week to help with temperature checks, health registration, and the offering. We need your help to return to normalcy! Contact me for information on volunteering at moderator@manoavalleychurch.org.

In the last issue, we highlighted your volunteer church officers. One of the many behind-the-scenes functions that is always ongoing is budgeting. While we are not a mega-church, our budget planning and execution process is complex with 21 independent steps through the year. We are thankful for our Treasurer, **David Shimabukuro**, MVC accountant **Alison Kawamoto**, and the Finance Committee led by former Moderator **Alan Ito** who continue to review both planning and execution of the budget and applying sound fiscal judgment to keep us solvent. The team is working on new initiatives to better support our mission while increasing transparency and reducing the effort involved.

Many thanks to God who has provided in so many ways, and you, who kept faith during the past year!

● Members Meet on Zoom to Conduct Church Business

Despite the continued closure of MVC because of the pandemic, 56 members gathered on Zoom for a Congregational Meeting on February 28. Led by moderator **Roger Au**, members reviewed and approved the Church operating budget as well as the slate of officers and committee chairs/members for 2021. Treasurer **David Shimabukuro** provided important information about our financial position and shared positive news that, despite the lack of in-person worship and activities, financial support of the Church remains strong. With donations from MVC members and friends we exceeded our projected goals for our Operating Budget and Building Fund for 2020. The Church also received several grants from the federal government and the State Department of Human Services to support salaries for our Church employees and costs for our child care programs impacted by the pandemic.



Because members recognized that God has blessed our ministry, the Church also approved the distribution of \$40,000 from the *COVID Relief Fund* to assist eight agencies that provide direct support to people and families hard hit by the pandemic. The following organizations will each receive \$5,000: Good News Prison Ministry, Hawaii Food Bank, Hawaii Meals on Wheels, River of Life Mission, St. Pius Food Pantry, United Church of Christ Transition House, UCC Women's Board of Missions, Waikiki Health Center. The Church took to heart the words of Jesus who reminds us that when we serve others, we serve God: *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.* Matthew 25:40

● Preschool Attains Accreditation!



Preschool Director **Marilyn Payapaya** received exciting news on February 10 that our school had achieved accreditation from the *National Association for the Education of Young Children* (NAEYC). She and her staff were ecstatic because the approval capped a long four-year quest to earn the coveted accreditation status, which recognizes the high quality of preschool education. To earn accreditation, the following requirements were completed:

- Teaching assistants earned their Child Development Associate degrees by completing online educational requirements.
- Director and teaching staff completed professional development courses to strengthen their educational qualifications.
- Director and teaching staff completed a comprehensive handbook verifying their educational curriculum/resources, classroom management, family interactions, professional development opportunities, institutional and facility resources.

In addition, the school improved the facilities in the following ways:

- Physical changes to the classrooms and playground area to meet NAEYC standards for a safe and stimulating learning environment for children.
- Acquisition of computers, educational materials, and other resources to enhance classroom learning.

To verify our school met all accreditation standards, a NAEYC representative visited the school on January 14 to talk to teaching staff, observe classroom activities, review the program's educational handbook, and complete the accreditation verification.

It is a tribute to Marilyn and her staff--**Theresa Yamada, Cherene Ridela, Chris Ching, Gwen Sunada**--for persevering through the accreditation process, which was complicated by changes in requirements as well as COVID restrictions that resulted in delays to the site visit. Through it all, the staff remained steadfast and kept the Preschool open while continuing to work with NAEYC to complete the final steps for accreditation. We are also grateful to the *Samuel N. and Mary Castle Foundation* which provided a \$10,000 grant to meet costs to fulfill accreditation requirements.



Teachers Gwen, Cherene, Marilyn, Theresa and Chris

Accreditation is only the first step in maintaining the high quality of our Preschool. The staff must continue to submit annual reports to NAEYC verifying their progress and complete professional development classes to update their teaching qualifications. We wish them the best as their journey continues!

● Provide a Meal for a Homeless Family



In the spirit of promoting volunteerism, we are publicizing Family Promise food donation opportunities for the year. Under the current arrangement, families are housed in separate rooms at a facility and have a refrigerator, microwave, and rice cooker. We are asked to provide dinner, which includes a main dish, sides, and dessert. You can choose to donate as much as you wish—some families are as few as two people and most include young children. If you cook for your own family, creating extra portions of the meal you are making that night will provide sustenance for a grateful family in need.

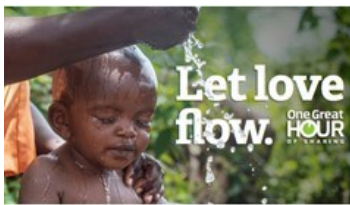
Here is the schedule for the rest of the year. We will be putting out a signup list as the dates approach. Please consider donating! Contact **Inga Park Okuna** at ingapark@me.com if you have any questions.

May 3 & 5

August 2 & 4

December 6 & 8

● An Opportunity to Help Improve Living Conditions Abroad



The *One Great Hour of Sharing* offering supports partners in countries with programs that fund health, education, and agricultural development, emergency relief, and refugee ministries as administered by the Wider Church Ministries section of the UCC. For instance, Congolese women refugees living in camps were taught to make face masks as a way of earning money and they were then able to return to places near their homes after the conflict ended. Monies are also used to help communities develop wells for access to clean

water. Please consider donating to this worthy fund by sending a check made out to Mānoa Valley Church with *One Great Hour of Sharing* written on the memo line. You can mail it to MVC or drop it in the collection mailbox outside the entrance to the gym. The suggested collection date is March 14, 2021.

● Next Step Shelter Lunch a Great Success!

Thanks to the Missions Committee and people who donated sandwiches, MVC was able to feed 100 residents at two facilities hosted by Next Step Shelter on February 21, 2021. Sacks containing two different sandwiches, chips, a granola bar and fruit plus drinks were delivered at noon by members of the Missions Committee. While they usually serve the meals there, pandemic restrictions made the brown bag lunches a reasonable and safe choice for this event. Thank you to all who donated food, time, and effort as the staff and residents of the shelters were very grateful for the sack lunches.



● Ash Wednesday Services Were Held On February 17



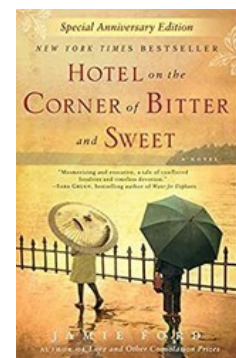
Despite the closure of the church due to the pandemic, we are finding ways to worship and practice our faith. On Ash Wednesday, congregants were given the choice of an in-person service in the breezeway at noon or a drive-through service in the evening. There was also an online service offered. This video captures images of participants in the first two options.

[Click to see the worship video.](#)

● Book Club Choice Focuses on Racism During WWII

Since the start of the pandemic, there have been documented cases of harassment and even violence against Asians in the United States as a result of the negative publicity about the coronavirus having originated in Wuhan, China. Former President Trump repeatedly emphasized this point, calling it the “Chinese flu” or “Kung Flu,” and even spread a rumor that it was unleashed from a scientific lab in Wuhan.

Japanese Americans experienced this same phenomenon during WWII when Japan began a fierce campaign to take over the Pacific, which included the bombing of Pearl Harbor on Oahu. This situation is interwoven in the plot of the story about a young Japanese girl and a Chinese boy, living in Seattle during that time. *Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford was selected by the MVC Book Club as their next common read. Look it up and if interested, contact **Dianne Ishida** at dianne@hawaii.edu about joining in the discussion, slated for Sunday, April 18th at noon.



UPCOMING EVENTS

MARCH 2021

02

MAR

- CG: Fun with Art

15

MAR

- Council Meeting

03

MAR

- CG: Discipleship & Leadership Development

21

MAR

- Deacons Meeting

04

MAR

- CG: Nutrition & Health

22

MAR

- CG Prayer Fellowship

07

MAR

- Worship Committee Meeting

23

MAR

- CG Fun with Art

08

MAR

- CG: Prayer Fellowship

26

MAR

- Prince Kuhio Day (Office Closed)

09

MAR

- CG Fun with Art

28

MAR

- Palm Sunday

11

MAR

- CG Nutrition & Health
- Trustees Meeting

30

MAR

- CG Fun with Art



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH