



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

May 4, 2022

● Pastor Abe's Message

"Being Jesus' Hands, Feet, and Mouth . . ."



As I write this letter to you, there is a Town Hall meeting happening down the street at the Mānoa Valley District Park to discuss the potential Mānoa Banyan Court project being proposed in the heart of our community. As I think about and pray for the community and what is being discussed, I can't help but think about how our country continues to harbor a deep divide that impedes elected officials from fulfilling their call and covenant to lead and individuals from being decent, good citizens and human beings. I remember that there is a war happening across the world that is devastating the lives of children and families and will undoubtedly gravely impact the entire world in the months and years to come. I'm also reminded of how all of humanity is in the third year of navigating through a worldwide pandemic, and how everyone is also dealing with and coping with their own personal issues and challenges in life.



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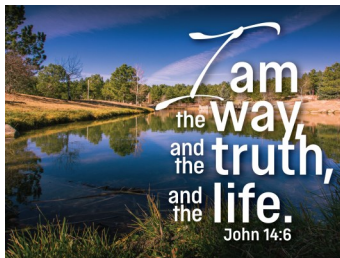


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Amidst all of this, you might be asking, "What is our call as followers of Jesus Christ? What is our call as His church?"

The longer we live on this planet and experience how the decisions we make and others around us make impact our individual lives and our communities, one thing that our present circumstances make clear is that whether we like it or not, we are interconnected. And in that sense, none of us are strangers in this world.

So, how does that impact us, Jesus Christ's Church . . . His Body? We live in complex times, filled with a great deal of nuance, difficult decisions, and grave implications for the choices we make . . . but our call is unchanged, to be Jesus' Body in the world— His hands, His feet, and His mouth, because He chooses to have no other hands or feet or mouth in the world except our own.



And so, a primary call we have is to do the work of Jesus Christ in every place we find ourselves—in our jobs, our neighborhoods, our schools, our families, our government – in Town Hall meetings like the one down the street, amidst war, as citizens of the world. How successful we are at fulfilling that call will not be measured by our wealth or comfort or fame or power. It will be measured by our behavior, how faithfully we have lived out being His Body, His presence, in all those places.

The truth is that most people we encounter will not want or feel the need for Jesus in their lives. Regardless, we faithfully stumble along the journey of following Jesus. We do this knowing that for many the only encounter they will have with Him may be through us— His Body, His church. And so, as we faithfully follow Jesus, the call is to be very careful with our words and actions, to be discerning with the difficult choices we are called to make, to choose to be sacrificial in the things we are called to do (or not to do), to be courageous in the words we are called to say . . . and we're able to do all this

because Jesus is with us. We can continue to believe, hope, and hang onto His words to us, and to the world He so loves, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life . . .”

So, though we don’t know exactly where the road will lead to on this side of eternity—where the journey will take us or what will come our way—by His grace, we follow Jesus to all the places He calls us to go.

In this season and all that it brings, remember, you are Jesus’ Body. Let that inform our behavior. Hear His call. Live in it. Trust in it—be Jesus’ Body in all the places He calls you to follow Him. Faithfully serve as His hands in all that you do. Faithfully serve as His feet in all the places you go. Faithfully serve as His mouth in all the words that you say to all those you encounter. Trust in the journey He is calling you to take. More than anything, trust in the Person who calls us to follow.

In Christ, Abe

● Moderator’s Message by Roger Au



As we witnessed, the church was alive for Easter service! Families filled the sanctuary with presence and friendship. Children’s happy laughter echoed throughout the playground during the festivities. It seemed that the church experienced rebirth too. Two months ago, reopening seemed to be a distant light. With a vision of what is possible, thoughtful planning, and the hard work of many volunteers, our reopening was a resounding success. We look forward to a growing calendar of events in our return to normalcy.

The breadth and depth of our programs are highly dependent upon the strength of the MVC volunteers. Related to the continuing call for support in the February newsletter, we are launching an informal mentorship program. The perceived need for this program arose in past Leadership Retreats and during conversations with members. We want to offer volunteers and others the opportunity to gain the confidence to take on other roles or projects which they may have refrained from in the past. Developing our ‘ohana would be helpful to help the church move forward in many ways.

A small cadre of seasoned leaders with the relevant knowledge and enthusiasm for sharing has been assembled to provide advice and constructive feedback. These respected mentors would be to provide support and guide potential mentees to develop solutions independently. Everyone has different backgrounds and personalities, so offering a cadre of mentors allows selection of a person with whom they are comfortable. We will provide more details shortly and look forward to continuing to serve God and our community.



The Pastor of Children and Family Ministries Search Committee has invested many hours reviewing applications, praying, and discerning where Jesus wants to lead us. The process is continuing and the Committee will have more information in the coming months.

We thank you for your patience with audio difficulties experienced in our online worship services via Zoom. Our sound system was installed over 15 years ago. It was not designed to be used with video streaming and the age of the system, coupled with the high Manoa humidity have been a challenge. The Trustees recognized the importance of long term continuance of the video platform and initiated a replacement project two years ago. The new system will fully integrate our audio and video requirements. While portions of the project have been budgeted, contractor availability and supply-chain issues have prevented forward progress.

● Mānoa Banyan Court Project Sparks Discussion



What is your opinion?

Several MVC members discussed the proposed Mānoa Banyan Court Project during a Zoom meeting on April 24. Participants included **Charles Wong**, from the Lin Yee Chung Association, which owns and operates the Mānoa Chinese Cemetery and **Lance Hirai** and **Steve Yuen** from the G70 Architects as well as representatives from the Mānoa Neighborhood Board, Mālama Mānoa, Mānoa Outdoor Circle, and Councilman **Calvin Say**. Mr. Wong presented the

case for the project, which plans to develop eight acres of preservation-zoned land for 288 affordable, low-rise housing units for seniors as well as buildings for commercial activity.

The plan has drawn criticism from residents concerned about increased traffic, parking and noise problems, loss of forest land, and the impact on the environment. MVC member **Paul Mark**, who lives adjacent to the property in question, voiced his concerns and those of a group of Mānoa residents he represented. It was a lively discussion with an exchange of many ideas, pro and con. Although MVC does not take a position on this issue, the Church wanted to offer a forum for our members during which questions and answers could be aired and accurate information conveyed.

Aside from providing housing for seniors, the project will also enable LYCA to generate income so it can remain solvent and able to maintain the cemetery grounds. The cemetery is a well-known historical site and familiar to many Hawaii residents who pay their respects to relatives and friends buried there. A Mānoa Town Hall meeting to discuss the project was held on April 30 at the Mānoa Valley District Park. For more information on the status of the project, click [here](#) for a link to the *Malama Manoa* newsletter or attend the Manoa Neighborhood Board meetings where the topic is discussed regularly.

● Missions Committee Is on the Move!

The COVID pandemic prompted many changes in our community as well as our Church. One of the important developments has been changes in our missions giving. Here's what the committee has done:



- Updated our [mission policy statement](#) (link) to guide the committee in its decision-making.
- Revised the way funds are distributed. Agencies are now asked to submit a formal request for funding and describe their purpose, the programs and services they provide, and how the funds will be used. In addition, we ask them to provide their annual reports and other data that describe their outcomes and impact on the community.
- Shared information during worship service in our *Missions Moments* where agencies describe their work and how the funds are used.
- Researched opportunities to help other groups in need. This year we made a donation to the Hawaii Conference United Church of Christ's *Ukraine Relief Effort*.

Thus far, \$43,800 has been/will be distributed to 22 organizations this year to help them carry out their work in the community and, in some cases, the world. **Jesus** exhorts us to be *the salt of the earth* and *the light of the world* to help sustain, enrich, and support our community. Thank you to the members of the Missions Committee for their diligence in carrying out this commandment.

● MVC Receives Grant for Child Care Programs



We recently received exciting news that Mānoa Valley Church has been awarded a federal grant, administered by the State of Hawaii, for \$225,890 for our child care programs. The funds were allocated to the State to award money to eligible child care programs and their employees who kept their programs operating safely during the pandemic. In addition to providing financial support for the Preschool and After School Care programs, each child care staff member as well as support staff will receive benefits.

Congratulations to **Alison Kawamoto**, our Accountant and Human Resources Specialist and treasurer **David Shimabukuro**, who applied for the grant and submitted documents to support our request. We also want to acknowledge member **Alan Ito** for informing us of this special program and encouraging the Church to apply. The grant recognizes the hard work and efforts of our Preschool and After School Care employees as well as our support staff that enabled us to continue our educational and child care programs while keeping our keiki safe and healthy. *Praise God for this special blessing!*



● Your Donations Keep MVC in Tiptop Condition

Thanks to your support of the Operating Budget and the Building Fund, your donations are keeping our church campus safe and in optimal condition. Several important projects are in the works including:

- Fixing the preschool building roof in July so rainwater does not accumulate on the surface
- Resurfacing the parking lot in July to seal the surface and add two more speed bumps for safety
- Purchasing our photovoltaic system effective November 1 to reduce energy costs



Did you notice we no longer charge the public to park in our lot? The Trustees decided to provide several “free” spaces near the concrete wall for Starbucks and other customers to use for a 15-minute grace period. Donations are encouraged and, so far, some have been received. Signage for the lot has also been revised to provide a more positive and welcoming message to our community.

● MVC Welcomes the Community to Our Easter Celebration!

By Maizie Okimoto, Chair of the Christian Education Committee

This year planning the Easter Festivities was a mystery. There was a lot of enthusiasm and ideas from various groups in our Church family to do this event. Volunteer **Dawn Hamada** from the Christian Education Committee served as coordinator. **Ruth Komatsu** led the children in singing during worship. Preschool Director **Marilyn Payapaya** and After School Care Director **Trisha Honda** rallied all the children to participate. Everyone remained passionate about carrying out their favorite undertaking in their own way. Most importantly, **Pastor Abe** provided the inspiration and vision for this special event....*to bring the community together!*



God must have been smiling about our efforts to plan this event without really understanding that **He** was the Chief Coordinator! Do you remember that suddenly the planning became out of our control when the RAIN made it necessary to pray to Him for Sunshine so we could have the Egg Hunt on the lawn rather than in the gym? Then when we were blessed with the sun, we were so happy we didn't need to be particular about how an assignment had to be done in a certain way! In our gladness we allowed ourselves to go with

our passion and instincts about how to lovingly serve the children and grownups that came to our particular station!

Jesus was alive in our hearts that morning! He was also present in the hearts of the participants that came to this Easter Celebration! There were Preschool and Afterschool Care parents and children, old and present MVC congregants, grownup Sunday School students looking for their past teachers, former Preschoolers and their parents, new faces from the community.... God must have rejoiced in our need to reach into ourselves to find the energy and love He had placed in our hearts to interact with all these people in ways we had not planned for. It was wonderful to be part of this joyful happening and serve God according to His plan!



Members contribute flowers to the cross decorated every Easter at MVC.



A Memorial Service for David S. Milotta



David S. Milotta, 68, retired pastor and father of our former Associate Pastor Makana, passed away on September 7, 2021. A memorial service will be held at Waialua United Church of Christ (67-174 Farrington Highway, Waialua, O'ahu) on Saturday, June 25, 2022, with visitation at 9 a.m., and service at 10 a.m.