

# PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



Sharing the Good News of Mission Hills United Church of Christ  
*An Open and Affirming (ONA) Congregation*

August 2022

## ***From Our Children, Youth, and Family Focus Groups***

Thank you to the 47 adults, youth, and children who participated in one of six Faith Formation Ministry focus groups. Our goal is to build a sustainable, effective ministry that is owned by the whole church, supported by but not dependent simply on staff.

It's hard to summarize (we have 17 pages of notes!), but across our group conversations, among the commonalities we found:

- We want to be the kind of church where “children and youth feel that they are an ‘incredibly important part’ of our congregation.”
- We want to “foster a sense of belonging and a safe place to explore and question,”
- make sure “children and families are loved unconditionally and supported in developing their gifts,”
- ensure “opportunities for the involvement and leadership of children and youth in worship and church life,”
- prioritize being “part of an intergenerational community,”
- and “make our space and services more accessible to the community.”

There is much, much more to unpack as we proceed. We have a very helpful roadmap.

In addition to 1) what kind of church we want to be for children, youth, and families, we discussed our 2) educational approach with children and youth, 3) relationships with and among parents, and 4) infrastructure.

Some goals are long term, like returning to Pilgrim Pines, and here are few things we're already working on for this fall:

*(Continued on page 2)*

## From Our Children, Youth, and Family Focus Groups (continued)

- Greater participation of children in worship and church life – like Blessing the Backpacks
- Parent night out (September 9) and opportunities for parent networking
- New curriculum for Sunday School and adding music – check out [illustratedministry.com](http://illustratedministry.com)
- Confirmation and service projects/mission trips – starting this fall
- Increase youth visibility – more discussion this fall
- Increase our community outreach and visibility in Mission Hills – like the Friday concerts at Pioneer Park
- Community Christmas Carol Camp for kids in December
- Consistent communication with parents and congregation – watch for more in our newsletters

I'm excited and blessed to be part of a dynamic group of volunteers, staff, and members. We're committed to nurturing the development of faith, values, and understanding that will provide a solid foundation for the lives of our young people.

Blessings  
Pastor David

## Back to School



You don't want to miss worship on August 28. We invite all students – and teachers! – to bring their backpack to church for a special blessing. It's one of my favorite Sundays of the year. Bring a friend with you. And a neighbor too!

On the 28<sup>th</sup>, our kids will act out the Gospel lesson of the Good Samaritan. It's just a taste of what we hope will be more involvement by children and youth in worship. Watch for more to come.

And in addition, during worship we will formally install Artcel as our Director of Ministry with Children and Families and Fiona as our Youth Leader. We will offer a special blessing upon their ministry.

Finally, after worship we will have an ice cream social!

## Installation Service

We will formally install Pastor David with a special service on **Sunday, August 7 at 3 pm**. We will be joined by members of UCC congregations in the Southern Association. The service will be in person and live-streamed. Our own Bruce Ramet will offer the message.

## Moderator Message

This month of August I would like to highlight the great work done by the Faith Formation Ministry with their focus groups with congregation members and interested church attenders to find out what people really want with MHUCC's ministry with children, youth, and families. There were multiple information gathering meetings with all ages.

The results of their focus group meetings were carefully reviewed and compiled into a report that was presented at the July Church Council meeting. This report offers a number of ideas and ways to invigorate church activities and better integrate all ages into the life of the church.

This both creates a positive and supportive environment for all ages of church members plus makes the church an interesting and inviting place for prospective new members.

As Pastor David reminded us, our church is fortunate to have a core group of children who regularly attend Sunday School and an ever-growing Youth Group. Many UCC churches are not so fortunate and don't currently have much of a Sunday School or Youth Group population. We have a foundation to preserve and grow.

Church youth that participated in the focus groups reported positive feelings about our church particularly our worship service, the church's service to others in the community, they appreciate being valued in the church, and appreciated the church being an accepting and inclusive community. The report suggests we can be doing more to involve and engage the youth in all aspects of the life of the church.

Parents of children and youth have very busy lives and have a lot of demands on their time. It is a challenge to balance it all. The church community can do much to support parents and provide opportunities for them to network.

We are fortunate to have a very energetic and enthusiastic new Director of Ministry for Children and Families, Artcel Ruiz, who has plans to bring these goals to life. Look for upcoming opportunities for parents to network and get to know each other better. Look for a Parents Night Out, a community Christmas Carol activity during Advent, various hands-on service projects for all ages, youth based choir and music opportunities, and the potential of a Pilgrim Pines type camp experience for multi-ages, and Vacation Bible School next summer. Pastor David would like to see a Mission Trip for youth as well.

We have much to look forward to at MHUCC.

Wishing you blessings this August, Carol

## Padres Game Night - August 19

The Fellowship Ministry would like to know...are you interested in going to a Padres game? The Padres are playing the Washington Nationals on Friday, August 19 at 6:40. If we have enough interest (at least 30 people) we will get tickets. Tickets will be about \$20.

Please let Anne Reichman know if you are interested via email [gammalan@aol.com](mailto:gammalan@aol.com) or text 203-733-2333. Thank you!



## Scholarship Sunday

We will give out three Women's Fellowship Legacy Scholarships this year.

Join us **Sunday, August 21** as we celebrate the educational pursuits of Amelia Norkowski, Trevor Norkowski, and Samantha Brown.

## Parent Night Out



SEPTEMBER 9TH, 6 - 9 PM

**DROP THE KIDS OFF FOR  
CRAFTS, FOOD & A MOVIE  
WHILE YOU HIT THE TOWN  
OR TAKE A NAP!**

[missionhillsucc.org](http://missionhillsucc.org)

One of the requests that came out of our focus groups was a parent night out. Ask and you shall receive! Our first one will be **Friday, September 9, from 6pm-9pm**. Parents can go on a date or go home and take a nap. We will provide food and activities for kids. Mark your calendar.

"We" means we need volunteers! Please talk to Artcel if you are willing to help, if not this time, a future date – [artcel.ruiz@missionhillsucc.org](mailto:artcel.ruiz@missionhillsucc.org).

## Bible Presentation

Many churches have a tradition of presenting Bibles to children entering third grade – complete with their name imprinted in "gold." Do you still have your third grade Bible? Resuming the practice, our presentation will be on **Sunday, September 18**. We've missed a few years, so this year we will present Bibles to kids up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. We have least TWELVE children in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade! Please let Artcel know your child's full name.

## From Artcel, Director of Ministry with Children and Families

What a welcoming church – Mission Hills UCC! I was welcomed with warm embraces and smiling faces since I arrived on June 15th. For me, this past month was a celebration of finding a church family. I got to meet the children, the youth, the ministry leaders, and the staff, and I am looking forward to meeting more of the people of the church.

In the next few months, we will see some great opportunities for children/youth and their families to participate together in activities that will allow them to experience God in more profound ways.

I would also like to meet you in small, informal gatherings so we may get to know each other and have conversations longer than a Sunday morning allows. Please let me know if you have time for a coffee/tea/hot cocoa.

Thank you again for welcoming my family and me into your family!

Artcel Ruiz, Director of Ministry with Children and Families

# SUNDAY SCHOOL



**Kids made some cards to be sent to our homebound members.**



**Our kids learned about the Parable of the Sower**

## Thank You Amelia

Amelia Norkowski has been one of our nursery attendants. Now that she is off to college, we want to thank her. Join us **August 21** to acknowledge Amelia's ministry with children.

## Sunday Opportunities

Church is nothing without community, and MHUCC has the best! Want to be more engaged with ours? Please consider the following:

- Welcoming new visitors as well as members and friends:  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f45a9a823a6f94-greeters>
- Being a Sunday Morning Liturgist:  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f45a9a823a6f94-liturgists>
- Ushering on Sunday Mornings  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f45a9a823a6f94-usher>
- Providing Flowers for the Chancel  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040F45A9A823A6F94-altar>
- Providing Fellowship Hour Refreshments  
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040f45a9a823a6f94-coffee1>

## History Corner—ZETA RHO STUDY CLUB

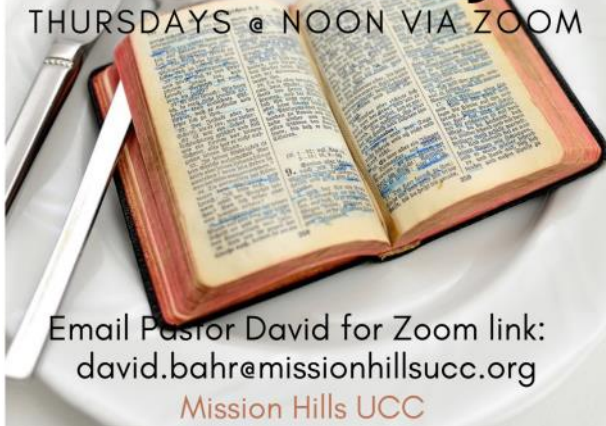
Perhaps you have heard of this group of women who meet in our church twice monthly. The history of the group goes back 75 years, when a group of women in Chicago formed the Delphian Society, seeking to continue their educational experience by meeting regularly to discuss topics of historic and national interest. In 1932, a San Diego chapter was established, meeting in the El Cortez Hotel. Since 1938, they have functioned independently of the national society. They are now called the Zeta Rho Study Club. Through the years they have met in various locations, before moving to Mission Hills United Church of Christ 3 years ago. They meet in our Fellowship Hall twice a month for member-led discussions and lunch.

If you would like to learn more about this group, you can speak with some of our church members who are enthusiastic Zeta Rho participants, - Jere McInerney, Marilyn Miles, Barbara Wiggins, Juanita Hill and Lorraine Boyle. Guests are always welcome.



# Lunch & Lectionary

THURSDAYS @ NOON VIA ZOOM



Email Pastor David for Zoom link:  
david.bahr@missionhillsucc.org

Mission Hills UCC

## Sunday 10 am Worship Service

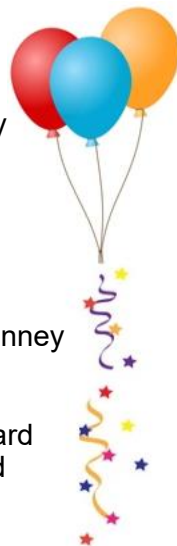
Please join us for worship in person or watch our livestream on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube](#) Channel.

A bulletin link is emailed at 6:00 p.m. on Saturdays and posted on [Facebook](#) Sunday morning if you wish to follow along.

On Mondays you can find closed caption video on our [website](#) and [YouTube](#).

## August Birthdays

- |        |  |
|--------|--|
| Aug 1  | Linda Wallis                                       |
| Aug 2  | Lucas Bowen-Ataide<br>Alex More                    |
| Aug 3  | Dennis Stryker<br>Marty Hom                        |
| Aug 5  | Daniel Carlin                                      |
| Aug 6  | Sandra Pettis                                      |
| Aug 10 | Melinda Murphy                                     |
| Aug 17 | Marla McBride                                      |
| Aug 18 | Charlie Berry<br>Gail Rutherford                   |
| Aug 19 | Don Fisher<br>Evie Gatzke-Winney                   |
| Aug 20 | Ellen Casey  |
| Aug 23 | Miranda Bernhard<br>Rover Bernhard<br>Steve Wallis |
| Aug 26 | Ken McIntyre<br>Cindy VanSise                      |
| Aug 27 | Karen deLaurier                                    |
| Aug 28 | Hannah More  |
| Aug 29 | Megan Caldwell                                     |
| Aug 31 | Tom Merrick  |



Please contact the church office with corrections or additions to the birthday list.

# Happy Birthday!

## Meeting Minutes

In order to enhance communication with the Congregation, here is a link to the minutes of the June Church Council Meeting:

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/junecouncil.pdf>

## Youth Group

Here is our pattern for youth group activities on Sundays:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday: Youth in the service, participate in communion, and meet briefly after church (check in)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday: Youth group meet during the service. Gather in the courtyard after the 'children's message'
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday: Youth participate in service. Liturgist, ushers, contribute music, meet briefly after church (check in)
- 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday: Youth group meet during the service. Gather in the courtyard after the 'children's message'



**Mission Hills United Church of Christ**  
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**Website: [www.missionhillsucc.org](http://www.missionhillsucc.org)**

### STAFF DIRECTORY

Position	Staff Member	Phone Ext.	Email
Pastor	Rev. Dr. David Bahr	ext. 302	<a href="mailto:David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org">David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org</a>
Director of Ministry with - Children and Families	Artcel Ruiz		<a href="mailto:Artcel.Ruiz@missionhillsucc.org">Artcel.Ruiz@missionhillsucc.org</a>
Administrative Assistant	Elizabeth Quinones	ext. 301	<a href="mailto:Elizabeth.Quinones@missionhillsucc.org">Elizabeth.Quinones@missionhillsucc.org</a>
Director of Instrumental Music	Kristopher Abels		<a href="mailto:kjabels@gmail.com">kjabels@gmail.com</a>
Director of Vocal Music	Angelica Eclar		<a href="mailto:angelicaella89@gmail.com">angelicaella89@gmail.com</a>
Youth Leader	Fiona Case		
Worship Technologies Coordinator	Saige Afalava		<a href="mailto:saige.afalava17@gmail.com">saige.afalava17@gmail.com</a>
Worship Technician	Trevor Norkowski		
Sexton	Carlos Wilson		

Additional Staff: Sunday Nursery - Gloria Schacht, Amelia Norkowski

*General information* [info@missionhillsucc.org](mailto:info@missionhillsucc.org)  
*News subscriptions & submissions (due on the 20th)* [news@missionhillsucc.org](mailto:news@missionhillsucc.org)

**Church Office Hours: Monday - Friday: 8:30 am - 3:30 pm**