

PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



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

December 2022

Preparing for the Gift

Advent is such an important and meaningful time, reminding us not only of gifts to buy but the ultimate Gift we receive. We slow down to prepare ourselves for the arrival with candles and special liturgies, singing, special foods and traditions – including the MHUCC daily email/booklet of stories and reflections. As well, pageants, candlelight services, and an afternoon choir concert.

On the first Sunday of Advent, about 40 people gathered to share a meal, make ornaments, and put the trees up in the sanctuary. We ended in the sanctuary with only the light of the trees, singing carols, hearing a story, and listening to a poem shared by children. It was a wonderful way to begin the season.



I look forward every year to sharing my collection of nativity sets – some that I have collected from around the world, gifts I have received, and a few that I said, I don't need anymore but couldn't pass it up. This multicultural witness surrounds us in worship in the sanctuary. Last year I took pictures of my nativities around the church. This year I took them all to the beach – from Imperial Beach to Mission and Pacific Beach to the cliffs above Torrey Pines. It was great fun. A few of them washed into the tide, but I quickly rescued them!



*Blessings as we prepare together,
Pastor David*

Our Special Services:

- Children's Christmas Pageant – Sunday, December 18, at 10 am
- Candlelight Choir Concert – Sunday, December 18, at 4 pm
- Candlelight Christmas Eve Services – Saturday, December 24, at 4 pm and 10 pm
- Christmas Morning – Sunday, December 25, at 10 am
- The Sunday January 1st service will be ONLINE ONLY.

Moderator Message

If people feel a bit ambivalent about or a bit unready for the holiday season arriving, a good anecdote can be found by attending a Sunday service or another activity at MHUCC. Just a week ago from this writing, we celebrated Thanksgiving on Sunday Nov. 20th with a wonderful feast in our beautifully decorated Fellowship Hall. No one left hungry for sure! We started looking ahead to the season of Advent in our service that same day considering what each person felt gave them hope.

Our wonderful “gift that keeps on giving” to the congregation started on the 1st day of Advent – the Advent Devotional daily scripture-reflection-story will continue through December 24th. If you are not receiving this through email or previously received a hardcopy booklet, contact the church office to be included.

A sizable group of all ages came together the evening of Nov. 27th for a celebration of Advent complete with a meal with delicious Filipino food, hot beverages and friendly folks to share a table, a choice to make crafts, ornaments, or set up Christmas Trees in the sanctuary, and the opportunity to sing some Christmas Carols together in the fully decorated sanctuary.

December brings both familiar and new Christmas events at church. The first Sunday 12/4 will provide the chance to help those rebuilding their lives after fleeing domestic violence by picking up a star from a tree during coffee hour to purchase a gift for an El Nido family.

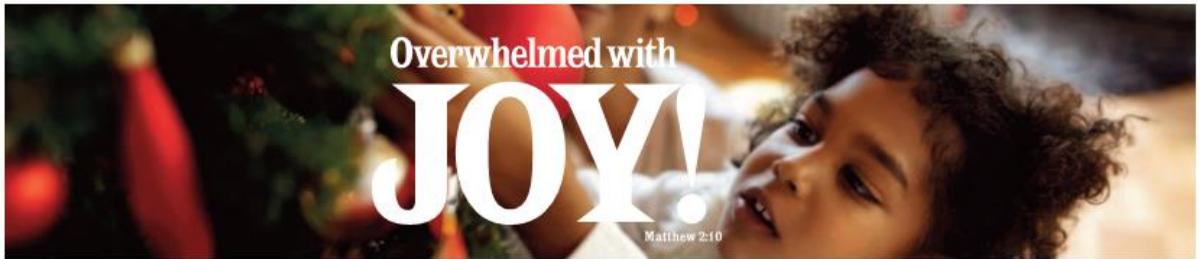


There will be an Angel Tree Party on December 10th to help provide holiday cheer to families and especially children of incarcerated parents. A new activity for children both within the church family and the larger community is the Christmas Carol Camp offered after school on Thursdays 12/1, 12/8, and 12/15. For those dealing with grief this holiday season, there are two additional meetings of a grief support group on Tuesdays 12/8 and 12/13 at 2 PM. Our neighbor church, Mission Hills Methodist, is offering a Blue Christmas Service on Monday 12/19 at 6 PM. The MHUCC traditional events many look forward to every year will indeed be back this year. Sunday Dec. 18th brings us the Children’s Christmas Pageant during the morning service and our wonderful choir under Angelica’s Eclar’s direction will be presenting a concert that afternoon at 4 PM. There will be both a 4 PM and 10 PM service to choose between on Christmas Eve and with Christmas December 25th falling on Sunday this year, there will be a special Christmas Day Service that day at the usual 10 AM.

Part of our church’s mission statement includes the statement that whoever you are and wherever you are on your faith journey, you are welcome here. Following that belief, there is no one prescribed way to approach the holiday season and celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. Find what works and is most meaningful for you. The one absolute I would conclude with is that our church Advent season events will be far more satisfying and leave you with the true meaning of the season instead of “Black Friday” sales or “Cyber Monday” offers.

Wishing you blessings this Advent season and into the New Year, Carol

December Mission Partner



Our December Mission Partner is the UCC Christmas Fund. The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ for over 100 years, providing emergency grants, supplementation of small annuities and health premiums, and Christmas “Thank You” gift checks each December to our lower-income retirees. You can place your contribution in the collection plate (use the Monthly Mission Partner envelope in the pew) or you can make it online by going to [www. https://missionhillsucc.org](https://missionhillsucc.org). Thank you for your generous support.

In 2021, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Monthly pension supplementation for 231 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,104,479)
- Health benefits supplementation for 87 retired clergy and lay employees (\$177,600)
- Emergency grants for 53 individuals and families (\$150,338)
- Christmas “Thank You” gift checks to 509 retired clergy and lay employees (\$254,000)

December Events

Thursday, 12/1	Christmas Carol Camp, after school
Tuesday, 12/6	Grief Group, MH Methodist, 2 pm
Thursday 12/8	Christmas Carol Camp, after school
Saturday, 12/10	Angel Tree Party
Tuesday, 12/13	Grief Group, Commons, 2 pm
Thursday, 12/15	Christmas Carol Camp, after school
Sunday, 12/18	Children's Pageant during worship, 10 am Baptism of Eliana Grace Childress Christmas Candlelight Concert, 4 pm
Monday, 12/19	Blue Christmas Service, MH Methodist 6 pm
Saturday, 12/24	Christmas Eve Services at 4 and 10 pm
Sunday, 12/25	Christmas Day Service at 10 am

For all events, visit our online calendar:
<https://missionhillsucc.org/calendar-of-events/>

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Mission Hills UCC's Children Ministry has incorporated singing and learning of new songs during Sunday school. They sang "Love is Love" with the youth during a Sunday service. Big thanks to Ellie Mout and Kris Abels that made this possible. We also had our very first Celebrity Sunday, where Judge Laurie Halgren shared exciting stories about being a judge, and the kids got to ask her questions. She also read a book called "Big Al" by Andrew Clements that taught us we couldn't judge people or things by how they look on the outside.



We're so excited for our **December 18th** 10am Worship Service when we'll have both carolers from the Christmas Carol Camp and the performance of the "On Christmas Night" Christmas pageant! Please mark you calendars. It's going to be a wonderful service full of joy!

Practices for the pageant will be during Sunday School on: December 4 & 11

The Christmas Carol camp will be held on the first three Thursdays of December at 1:30pm: December 1, December 8 & December 15

[Sign up here](#)

If you know children who may be interested please pass this information on!

Christmas Carol Camp

LEARN TO SING TRADITIONAL & NEW CHRISTMAS CAROLS!
PLUS- SNACKS, GAMES & MORE
FOR KIDS IN GRADES 1-6

**First 3 Thursdays in
December at 1:30 pm**

MISSION HILLS UCC
MISSIONHILLSUCC.ORG

SCAN TO SIGN UP!

New Members

Marjorie Wahlsten: I was born in San Diego during World War II, about 2 miles from where I now live in Hillcrest. I've lived in San Diego County most of my life. My husband and I moved from Poway to Hillcrest in 1990. He said I was "returning to my roots." We both worked for the City of Poway and I retired as City Clerk. We spent 2 years traveling in our motorhome. Neither one of us had seen much of the United States and we enjoyed exploring. I met my goal of visiting and touring all the State Capitol buildings and my Christmas decorations include ornaments I purchased in many of their gift shops. My husband died in 2016 but I'm fortunate to have a close group of friends that enjoy theatre, concerts, museums, etc. I've been a volunteer at the San Diego Zoo for the past two years and enjoy sharing their conservation message with guests.



When I was searching for a new church home, I visited MHUCC because my good friends, Reba and Imre Quastler, had spoken so highly of it during their long membership. I appreciate the social justice outreach and it's nice to have a church I can walk to. I look forward to becoming involved.

Frank Ruiz: Born and raised in Clark Air Base, Philippines, Frank is the fourth child of eight children. Dad, Domingo Sr, was in the United States Airforce for 28 years while mom, Lolita, took care of the kids. Frank came to the United States at the age of 18 and lived in San Jose, CA. Living now in San Diego, he's been a commercial truck driver for 20+ years. When he's not working, he enjoys fishing, playing basketball, cooking, and studying the Bible with other men from different churches and denominations. And most significantly, he loves spending time with his kids and wife, Artcel.



Artcel Ruiz: Born and raised in Manila, Philippines, and came to San Diego when she was 15. She has been married to her husband, Frank, for 26 years. They have two children, Justin, 25, and Jianna, 17. Artcel recently graduated from Claremont School of Theology with a master's degree in Divinity. The next goal is to pursue a Doctor of Ministry.

Artcel has been leading life groups, chairing various ministries, working with children, and occasionally preaching at her church for years. She is passionate about empowering and being an advocate for children. Her desire is for the kids and their families to experience and personally know God.

Wearing so many hats—mother, wife, employee, friend—can be a lot, so having “me-time” is a non-negotiable for Artcel. Getting lost in a book, taking walks, having hot cocoa, or unwinding with favorite tv shows or a play is vital.

From BREAD and CUP to FAITH and GIVING

Thank you to everyone who responded so generously. Our stewardship campaign is off to great start. As of today, we have 82 pledges for a total of almost \$371,000.

If you have yet to pledge to the mission and ministry of MHUCC for 2023, we invite you to call, email the church office or pledge [online](#). Thank you!

New Year's Day Service - Online Only

Worship on January 1st will be online only. Our six partnership churches are collaborating on a pre-recorded worship service. Please mark your calendars.

History Corner

Just a few blocks from our church is the Mission Hills United Methodist Church, a lovely building on the corner of Ft. Stockton and Lark. Their church was founded in 1915, just 3 years after Mission Hills UCC (then known as Mission Hills Congregational.) Our church Council minutes from 1932 share that the Methodist Church was “encumbered with mortgage and debts” and some of their members approached our Council with the proposal to combine churches, - “sharing the religious responsibility of this community.” Our church was willing to consider this and approached the Congregational general conference. Despite the fact that we also had financial struggles during those years (mid-1930's), there seems to have been no serious attempt to join the congregations. Today, we are happy to say that we are “sharing the religious responsibility of the community” through occasional joint programs. We recently worked together to sponsor an anti-gun violence vigil in Pioneer Park and are currently joining together for a 4-week grief support group.

We Grieve Because We Love

Grief Support Group

A Four-Week Collaboration of
Mission Hills United Church of Christ (UCC) &
Mission Hills United Methodist Church (UMC)

Tuesdays at 2 pm

11/1 @ UMC 11/8 @ UCC
12/6 @ UMC 12/13 @ UCC



A Program of Prison Fellowship

Thank you to all those who participated with Angel Tree last November 13. All our "angels" were picked and we cannot wait to see the children's beautiful faces when our Santa hands them their gifts!

We have invited our Angel Tree families for a luncheon on December 10, Saturday. We will be singing Christmas carols, doing crafts, and face painting. If you would like to volunteer for this wonderful event, please email me at artcel.ruiz@missionhillsucc.org.

Thank you to Kathy Schwarz and family who helped us with the registration.

Advent Book

The email distribution of the 2022 Advent Book began on Saturday, November 26 and will continue on a daily basis until Saturday, December 24, The Advent Book includes a daily Scripture reading, a Reflection on that Scripture and a Story by various members of the congregation on how God has touched their lives in a special way. The distribution is provided to all of those who have received the Advent Book or Prayer Cards via email in the past. **If you have not received those emails in the past** and would like to receive the daily Advent Book, please contact Elizabeth in the church office.

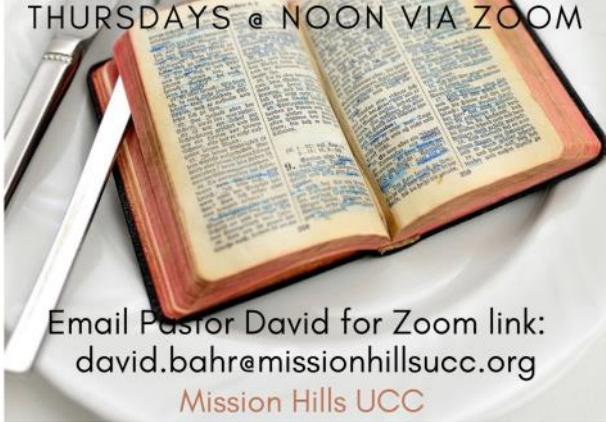
Elf opportunities

The Feeding Mission Hills food distribution program is looking for enthusiastic elves to help with the bakery item pick up on Thursday mornings in December and the new year. You only need to charge up your sleigh once a month for the trip to Barons Market Point Loma. If you can help please call the head elf, Emy Yeazell At 619-952-7909. (i'll put in a good word to Santa for you if you decide to volunteer.)

Calendar collection: If you have been receiving too many complimentary calendars from various charities, please bring them to church so we can make them available for our food distribution clients.

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](#).

December Birthdays

Dec 3	Larry Holt Robert Merrick Levi Sandusky
Dec 6	Judy Carter
Dec 9	Monica Slev Andrea Compton
Dec 12	Juanita Curtis
Dec 13	Carol Vaughan Carlos Wilson
Dec 14	Susan Maginn
Dec 15	Jane Haubert
Dec 18	Megan Merrick
Dec 21	Pam Adler Marc Tarasuck
Dec 27	Evelyn Antos



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



Meeting Minutes

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

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/OctoberCouncil.pdf>

Youth Group - Casas de Luz - February 3 & 4

The Mission Hills UCC Youth Group, families and friends are organizing a mission trip to Mexico to build a family a home working with [CASAS DE LUZ](#). The trip will be coordinated by Zoe who is a [high school intern](#) with Casas de Luz. Please [FILL OUT THIS FORM](#) to express interest.

We will be traveling into Mexico on a Saturday morning. We will travel together in rented vans. No need to use your own vehicle. We will stay in simple, but safe accommodation on Saturday night (food and accommodation provided by Casas de Luz) . We will be framing, painting, roofing, cutting wood with the guidance of experienced experts. We will have the opportunity to hand over a completed house to the family who will live there before we return to the US on the Sunday.

For more information contact [Fiona](#).



Mission Hills United Church of Christ
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 (619) 296-2169; Fax (619) 296-2115
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STAFF DIRECTORY

Position	Staff Member	Phone Ext.	Email
Pastor	Rev. Dr. David Bahr	ext. 302	David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org
Director of Ministry with - Children and Families	Artcel Ruiz		Artcel.Ruiz@missionhillsucc.org
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Director of Instrumental Music	Kristopher Abels		Kris.Abels@missionhillsucc.org
Director of Vocal Music	Angelica Eclar		Angelica.Eclar@missionhillsucc.org
Youth Leader	Fiona Case		Fiona.Case@missionhillsucc.org
Worship Technologies Coordinator	Saige Afalava		Saige.Afalava@missionhillsucc.org
Worship Technician	Trevor Norkowski		
Sextons	Carlos Wilson & Gloria Schacht		
Sunday Nursery	Gloria Schacht & Jianna Ruiz		

General information

info@missionhillsucc.org

News subscriptions & submissions (due on the 20th)

news@missionhillsucc.org

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

