

# PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



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

February 2023

## Back Together Again

In just a few weeks, I will fly back to Denver to finish packing our home into a truck and moving our whole family to San Diego. After 18 months, we are ready to start new adventures together. It will be a busy couple of weeks as everyone who has ever moved knows. You'll see Art and meet Lance for the first time in early March.

I'm so excited that on January 22 we welcomed Rev. Portia Howard to our church family as our new Minister for Congregational Care. She is an absolute delight and you will enjoy getting to know her. She will work collaboratively with the Diaconate and Prayer Ministry to facilitate the loving care of our congregation for one another. Our program staff had a Saturday retreat just in time to incorporate her onto our team of amazing individuals.

In a few days our Youth Group led by Fiona Case will cross the border to build a home for a family in Tijuana. Twenty-five youth, parents, and other church members will represent all of us as the hands of Christ. We asked you for \$6,500 for the cost of building the house. In three weeks, you donated more than \$8,000, minus some expenses for the Fine Dining Experience they provided, which means we can also provide the new homeowners with linens, a propane stove, and other useful items. It was fantastic to both watch the servers and taste the delicious food they made. We can't wait to see the pictures of the new house. Please pray for their safety as they travel to and from on February 4 and 5.

Lent is around the corner and will begin with Ash Wednesday on February 22. We will have a brief service for the imposition of ashes in our courtyard at Noon and then that evening, have a joint worship service and supper at one of the Partnership churches – to be determined. It will both be in person and online. Then Ken Jensen, one of our Members in Discernment on his ordination journey, will lead a five week series on a Progressive Christian's response to God's Earth – each Monday evening, mostly on Zoom.

I'm celebrating 30 years of ordination this month. On February 5<sup>th</sup> I will share what it was like to be ordained as one of the first openly gay pastors called to a church. God has been good, as God always is.

But right now, I'm grateful to soon be back together with my family again!

*Blessings, Pastor David*

## Moderator Message

If you have happened to glance at the list of upcoming events for MHUCC (included in the Sunday service bulletin and in the Mission Minute), you might have noticed there is a Council Retreat scheduled for February 11<sup>th</sup>.

The purpose for this event is not just a social event or even a continuation of regular council business. The purpose is to start talking about the future of the church and how to best structure church leadership and organization so we function effectively well into this second century of the church's existence.

It is easy to look at how our church is operating now and go with the popular saying, "... if it ain't broke, don't fix it!" That's understandable to feel that way as our church is doing well compared to many in this somewhat post-pandemic time. But it is always good to look at operations of any group or organization and ask can we do it any better, any easier, and/or more flexibly. And the bigger question, if we are able to somewhat streamline the basic operations could that free us up to give time and attention to people, mission, and community?

Coincidentally (or not – when one least expects it, God can move in mysterious ways), Neil Senturia's recent column in the business section of the San Diego Union-Tribune on 1/23/23 discussed lessons for innovators proposed by a Nobel Prize winning economist Daniel Kahneman. But wait, can business or economist lessons apply to a house of God?? Good question and in some cases, I can see how they can apply. See what you think... Here were some of the lessons brought out in the article:

The Illusion of Understanding – this was described as fitting past events into a satisfying story, thinking we understand why things were done a certain way, and not imagining it turning out differently. If we have always done or arranged things a certain way, how could it possibly be done differently? Or could things perhaps be done even better, clearer, or easier?

The Illusion of Pattern – This was giving meaning or a specific reason to events that were just random or by chance. We always have done certain things at specific times and in certain ways – was there a reason for this to start with or this just by chance that we did it that way? If it was just by chance or by habit, could there be a better way to do things?

Extreme Predictions – the article explained this (in a business perspective) as "No, your company is not going to be the next Google." Perhaps for a church this could be rephrased as *No, your church is not going to be the next area Mega-church*. I tend to think this is unlikely to be any of our hopes or aspirations for MHUCC. But, aspiring to be the "greatest attendance church around" wouldn't seem to be what our highest hopes should be...

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## Moderator Message (continued)

Finally the last lesson seems to really hit home in terms of church to me – Overconfidence -- The newspaper article states “The illusion of validity lets us make huge bets with blind confidence. .. But let’s get real.”

The bible has something to directly to say about this – Proverbs 16:18 (RSV): “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Also, Isaiah 5:21 “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.”

Finally, Romans 12:16 “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation.”

We have to walk a line between making decisions based on our best judgement and experience but still listening for the spirit of God to lead us.

Wishing you a blessed February, a Happy Valentine’s Day in whatever way you celebrate it, and, to end on a high note – remember its less than eight weeks to the start of spring. :)

Carol

## Ministry with Children and Families

We kicked off January with a meeting with the Sunday School leaders and talked about events and the curriculum that we are going to use for the first quarter. Our goal was to continue to cultivate an environment where they feel they belonged, grow in their faith, and truly know that God loves them while having fun at the same time.

This quarter will involve an After Christmas party, a new “celebrity” guest, a Communion class after the Sunday service next week, a Parents’ Night Out, and a field trip to the Mission Hills Nursery.

I am excited about how we can continue this year to be present and make a difference in the children’s lives and deepen relationships with them and their families.

- *Artcel Ruiz*

**SUSTAINING A MOVEMENT**

How do we create and sustain a movement for racial justice and equity  
IN OUR FAITH COMMUNITIES AND WIDER WORLD?

Join us for an afternoon of lunch, discussion, and capacity building for our churches.



**SUNDAY, FEB 5TH, 2023**  
12:30 - 3:00 pm  
(lunch 12:30 - 1:00 pm)

Featuring  
Rev. Chad Tanaka Pack  
Consulting Conference  
Minister for Racial  
Justice, Equity, and  
Inclusion

A San Diego UCC Partnership Church event at  
The Table: United Church of Christ of La Mesa  
5940 Kelton Ave, La Mesa  
(Zoom link available as well)

## Racial Justice in the San Diego UCC

Join our UCC Partnership Churches in San Diego to discuss how we create and sustain a movement for racial justice in our church and our churches. We will be joined by Rev. Chad Tanaka Pack from the Southern California Nevada Conference UCC. It will be held at the UCC in La Mesa from 1-3 pm on *Sunday, February 5*. Lunch will be held at 12:30.

Please [RSVP](#) so we have correct numbers for lunch.

## Growing Up in the Black Church

As we celebrate Black History Month, Join Juanita Hill and Ronnie Williams to hear their stories of growing up in the Black Church – after worship **Sunday, February 12**.

## Welcome Pastor Portia



Rev. Portia Howard has served the past 10 years as a hospital chaplain and church leader in Texas and California. She brings all of her gifts to us as our new Minister for Congregational Care.

Prior to joining our team, Pastor Portia earned her bachelor's degree in Theology and her Master of Divinity. She has served as a chaplain in Emergency Medicine, Oncology, Palliative Care, and Adolescent, Adult, and Senior Behavioral Health. Originally from Virginia, she has fallen in love with the state of California. She is a beloved daughter, sister, aunt, and friend.

Pastor Portia is a former tiny house owner, a diehard tennis lover, and a Frasier television show fan. One of her life's verses is Romans 5:4, "Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope."

## Meet our family: Mario, Nubia and and Jaziel (3 years old)



The place where they are currently staying in is not good - it's really cold and Mario's salary as a kitchen helper is not sufficient to make improvements and also pay their living expenses. They are feeling very blessed to be able to receive a home from Casas de luz and MHUCC! The MHUCC youth group, families, and friends will be traveling to Colinas del Sol, Tijuana, on Saturday February 4th to build their new home. We will stay the night in TJ and return the next day having handed over the keys to Mario and Nubia. Thank you to everyone who is supporting this mission trip with their donations towards the cost of the building materials, and their prayers.

## SOUPer Bowl 2023

Thank You. THANK YOU. **THANK YOU!**

We have our **SOUP TEAMS** for **SOUPer Bowl Sunday**. Those teams are as follows:



**MHUCC Choir**  
**Men's Group**  
**Fellowship Ministry**  
**Youth Group**  
**Church Council**  
**7 Friends**  
**Amy's Amigos**

Save the date...**Sunday, February 19**  
after the church service.

It's going to be a great, fun and delicious event! **BE THERE**  
and support our *February Monthly Mission Partner*:  
**Uptown Community Service Center.**



**GOD'S EARTH, OUR CALL:  
A GATHERING FOR LENT**  
Led by Ken Jensen



Monday, February 27 @ 7-8pm in person  
& 5 consecutive Mondays thereafter on  
ZOOM

**God's Earth, Our Call: A Gathering for Lent**

“Climate change is fast, much faster than it seems we have the capacity to recognize and acknowledge; but it is also long, almost longer than we can truly imagine.”

— David Wallace-Wells, *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life After Warming*

How are we to respond? The scale and scope of the climate crisis often overwhelms: Do our individual and community efforts even matter?

This Lent, we will gather to consider our call with respect to climate change. Lent is a time for honest reflection on who we are and what we are called to be. What does our faith teach us about who we are in relationship to the earth and how we are to live? What action do we sense God calling us to do? What difference can our actions even make?

Come learn together as we seek to turn our attention to intention.

**Monday, February 27<sup>th</sup> at 7-8:00 p.m. in the Commons (and on Zoom) and 5 consecutive Mondays thereafter on ZOOM. Lead by Ken Jensen**

**Uptown Spring  
Beatles Tribute Concert**

Uptown is excited to present to you the music of the wonderful “4 Lads from Liverpool,” a Beatles Tribute Band. Hold the date for March 18<sup>th</sup>, from 2 to 4:30 PM, rain or shine, at Pioneer Ocean View Church located at 2550 Fairfield St., San Diego 92110. Parking and handicapped parking are available onsite.

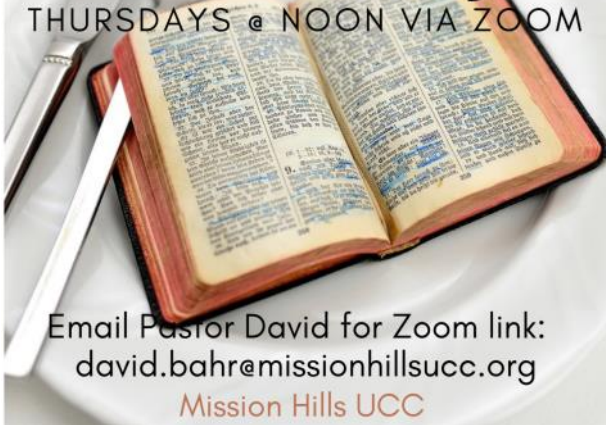


We will begin with a social time with beverages available and raffle tickets sold for basket prizes. A silent auction will also be held. Dessert and coffee to follow. Come out, bring some friends, and enjoy this afternoon concert that will benefit Uptown and the clients it serves as well.

*To purchase your tickets, see Karen deLaurier, James Roth or Joan Anderson.*

# Lunch & Lectionary

THURSDAYS @ NOON VIA ZOOM



Email Pastor David for Zoom link:  
[david.bahr@missionhillsucc.org](mailto: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](#).

## February Birthdays

Feb 2	Julia Fordham
Feb 3	Mike Groby
Feb 5	Betty Darling
Feb 6	Gabriella Stryker
Feb 7	Kimberly Antos
Feb 12	Robin James Lilian Antos
Feb 14	Katelyn Berman
Feb 15	Elsie Brooks
Feb 18	Nora Stallone
Feb 19	Ryan Cage
Feb 20	Erik More
Feb 22	Evan Barnes-Wallace
Feb 25	Jane Illades Ava Lantis
Feb 26	Cassidy Watelet
Feb 27	Susan Sato
Feb 28	Otis Caldwell



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 December Church Council Meeting:

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/DecemberCouncil.pdf>

## History Corner



RAMET, Mr. & Mrs. Bruce

In 1974, the congregations of 1<sup>st</sup> Congregational Church and Mission Hills Congregational Church voted to come together as one church. In the first pictorial directory of the newly unified congregations, we find this picture of new members Dianne and Bruce Ramet. Since then, Bruce and Dianne have been active church members, serving on many various church committees and ministries. They began singing in our choir in 1974 and still sing with our church choir and other community choral groups. Their 2 daughters, Nicole and Danielle, grew up in this church and still live in Southern California. Bruce and Dianne love MHUCC, its members/friends/staff, its theology, its Open and Affirming nature, its outreach and the many on-going mission projects. We are blessed to serve with them.

### Mission Hills United Church of Christ

4070 Jackdaw Street, San Diego, CA 92103

(619) 296-2169; Fax (619) 296-2115

**Website: [www.missionhillsucc.org](http://www.missionhillsucc.org)**

### STAFF DIRECTORY

Position	Staff Member	Phone Ext.	Email
Pastor	Rev. Dr. David Bahr	ext. 302	David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org
Minister for Congregational Care	Rev. Portia Howard		Portia.Howard@missionhillsucc.org
Director of Ministry with - Children and Families	Artcel Ruiz		Artcel.Ruiz@missionhillsucc.org
Administrative Assistant	Elizabeth Quinones	ext. 301	Elizabeth.Quinones@missionhillsucc.org
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		
Sexton	Gloria Schacht		
Sunday Nursery	Gloria Schacht & Jianna Ruiz		

*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**