

# PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



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

April 2023

## The Church is Stronger Together

MHUCC is blessed by strong relationships with sibling churches in the UCC. In March we celebrated 40 years together as six UCC Partnership Churches in San Diego, established in 1983 among racially and ethnically diverse congregations. The makeup of the churches has shifted over the years but the desire to be in relationship has not. We have a history of marching together in Pride and the MLK Parade, studying the UCC's white privilege curriculum, pulpit exchanges, picnics, youth programming, and services during Lent. The pastors and a lay representative from each church meet every other month. Carol Vaughan is our representative.

Last weekend, we hosted 80 leaders from our six churches at MHUCC along with staff members from our Southern California Nevada Conference UCC. Attendees represented church councils and leaders of other boards or ministries from each church. We came together to understand the changing dynamic of church life in our post-pandemic age and how to be faithful to God's call for our future. We are stewards of a strong legacy. These conversations will help shape how we update our leadership structure. Much more on this is to come.

Also ongoing among our Partnership – we just had an overnight with youth at Kensington UCC. All of our churches are working together on our commitment to racial justice, equity, and inclusion. Listen for more opportunities to get connected. And we are planning an anniversary celebration at Mission Bay in the Fall. And during Holy Week, if you would like to participate in an Easter Vigil on Saturday night, University City United Church invites anyone from our Partnership to attend.

Blessings to us all for a meaningful and holy observance of Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter.

*Blessings,  
Pastor David*

## Lent & Easter Activities

### *Palm Sunday*

BYOP – bring your own palms for a procession down Fort Stockton with the United Methodist Church. Gather in front of our church at 9:30 am on Sunday, April 2 as we share our ecumenical spirit with our neighbors.

### *Maundy Thursday*

We will have a Maundy Thursday Service at Noon in the Chapel and later in the day we will have an intimate service of Holy Communion as we enact the Last Supper on Thursday, April 6, at 7 pm in our sanctuary and live online. We will offer an optional foot washing as well.

### *Good Friday*

Join us on [Zoom](#) at Noon for a brief time of reflection. *Meeting ID: 881 7382 9237*  
*Passcode: 955611*

### *Easter Sunrise*

Our sunrise service this year will be **at Pioneer Park** along with the United Methodist Church. Join us at 6:30 am as we watch the sun rise in the big open area.

### *Festival Worship*

Our 10 am worship service on Easter will feature the music of brass and the sound of glorious singing. Following the service, we will have an Easter Egg Hunt at 11:15, open to the community.



The poster features a stylized eye graphic on the left, composed of overlapping circles in shades of purple, blue, and green. To the right of the eye, the text reads "seeking: honest questions for deeper faith". Below this, the main title "Easter Services" is written in a large, white, serif font. Underneath the title, the schedule is listed: "6:30 am - Sunrise Service at Pioneer Park", "10 am - Easter Celebration Worship", and "11:15 am - Easter Egg Hunt". At the bottom left, it says "For more information:" followed by a QR code. To the right of the QR code is the website address "missionhillsucc.org".

seeking:  
honest questions  
for deeper faith

Easter Services

6:30 am - Sunrise Service at Pioneer Park  
10 am - Easter Celebration Worship  
11:15 am - Easter Egg Hunt

For more information:  missionhillsucc.org

## Moderator Message

I wasn't planning on doing another "in memoriam" type of message this month but circumstances dictated otherwise. In early March I received a phone call from Elizabeth Quiñones letting me know that church member and long time Sunday School teacher Mike Groby had passed away. It was completely unexpected and such a shock, I almost found it hard to believe at first. As I called and informed several other people from church that knew Mike well, it came as a shock to all of us. Mike was not overly social with other adults at church except for those of us that assisted him in the Sunday School classroom but he was unflinching pleasant and, if he knew you, he would always greet you warmly and ask how you were doing.

Mike was a man of great faith and took communion most every week without fail. From what I knew personally and what I have learned more about online – Mike had two areas of great passion in his life – one was umpiring amateur softball, and the other was working with children – both a career in education (especially working with children learning to read) and leading Sunday School classes and sharing his faith with children.

I was aware of Mike's work as a softball umpire but he was modest and never boasted of the number of years he umpired or how revered he was in the sport. I learned online that he had previously been inducted into the Halls of Fame for two different groups – America's Finest City Softball League and North American Gay Amateur Athletic Alliance. People online commented about the dramatic and exuberant calls he made as an umpire and what joy he always brought to the game. Players referred to Mike as "my favorite umpire", and "I loved it when he would scream foul – he made the game fun", and "He was one of a kind."

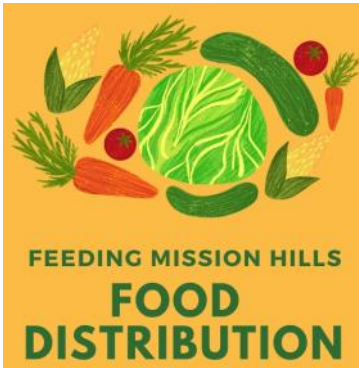
Mike made an equally indelible mark with the numbers of children who were in his Sunday School classes over the years. The sheer joy he had for each and every kid in the class was evident every time. He knew everyone's name in class and something about each one. He would start each class reminding kids of the simple classroom rules and then would always ask each child to share something about their week. He listened to each one and showed such respect and care for the kids. They responded and enjoyed Mike's instruction and stories. He shared his faith honestly



and frequently with the kids and gave a lot of attention to every lesson. He always ended the classes telling the children he would be praying for them. Earlier in March all the Sunday School teachers met with the kids to talk about Mike's death and they all had something to share about Mike. I was particularly touched by one comment that "... now Mike will be with his sister in heaven." During the class that morning they all made cards to remember Mike and say how he touched their lives. These cards are just beautiful and I would encourage you to take a look at them as they are posted on a bulletin board in the hallway outside the Fellowship Hall.

*I will conclude with a comment borrowed from a former softball player about Mike –  
"May he rest in peace and know he was loved."*

## Monthly Mission Partner– MHUCC Monthly Food Distribution



For over 12 years, MHUCC, in association with Special Delivery/ Ruth and Bob Hendricks, have operated a food distribution for the church parking lot on the third Tuesday of every month. This is operated rain (example – the recent March 2023 distribution) or shine. We serve a number of people who are food insecure in the general vicinity including a number of low-income seniors. We typically serve 150 or more customers every month. With the cost of living and particularly food costs increasing lately, there are frequently lines of people a half a block long or longer waiting for the food bags to be distributed on any distribution Tuesday.

For all of the years these distributions have taken place, the church has purchased a protein food item for each customer (typically canned tuna, canned chicken, or a jar of peanut butter) funded faithfully and generously by an annual allocation of the Mission and Outreach Ministry budget.

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, remaining food was secured through Feeding San Diego (the local affiliate of Feeding America) and included some packaged and canned foods and some produce. The produce arrived in large grocery store sized bins which had to be sorted and repackaged to give out to customers. This required a large number of volunteers and also involved a lot of clean up. The quality of the produce was sometimes poor requiring the disposal of bad food. We were left with pallets and large boxes to dispose of or recycle after the distribution.

This mode of distribution had to be changed once Covid restrictions began as we could not have as close of contact with customers and couldn't have large groups of volunteers working closely together. In consultation with Ruth Hendricks, an alternative model was developed. Ruth could obtain high quality bulk produce for us through a wholesale restaurant supplier, her husband Bob agreed to pick it up and deliver it to the church parking lot early on the distribution days, and a smaller group of volunteers could pack grocery bags with an assortment of fresh fruits and vegetables plus a protein food. Customers could just pick up a packed bag from tables. This is the program that we now refer to as Feeding Mission Hills.

An initial generous donation from a MHUCC member made it possible to start this in April 2020 and, due to continuing donations from both church members and community members, this program keeps on bringing healthy fresh food to people who really need it every month. If we have any leftover filled grocery bags at the end of a distribution, the surplus is taken to First Congregational Towers for their residents. There is never any food wasted or thrown out.

If you would wish to contribute to the food distributions, you can make a donation of cash or check (payable to MHUCC with food program on the memo line) in the special donation envelope in the pews or online. We are grateful for the support and generosity of so many.

# SUNDAY SCHOOL



The kids were involved in participating in answering the survey that Faith Formation had created. Faith Formation came during the Sunday School and the kids did really well in answering the questions.

Two weeks ago, we learned that one of our Sunday School teachers, Mike, passed away and on March 5<sup>th</sup>, the children wrote letters to him. One of the volunteers from the Trauma Intervention Programs came to give support to us and brought stuffed toys to each child.



We – the children, families, and Sunday School teachers - went to Mission Hills Nursery for a field trip. We learned different kinds of plants and trees, met their chicken pets, and enjoyed popcorn while doing the tour.



## The Church is Stronger Together – Part 2

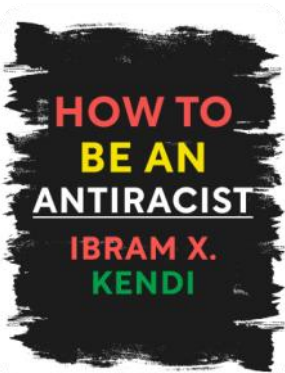
We are deepening our ties with our friends at Mission Hills United Methodist Church. On Palm Sunday, bring your palms and gather in front of the church at 9:30. Our two churches will wave our palms and sing Hosanna and walk together along Fort Stockton.

Then, join our two churches together at Pioneer Park at 6:30 am for a joint Easter Sunrise Service. We will see how it goes our first year and then be more intentional about inviting our neighbors. The numbers at our own sunrise service over the years have declined so we are seeking to bring new life and new purpose. If we do it together, we will all be stronger.



## All Church Read

The UCC General Synod this summer in Indianapolis will include an address by noted scholar Ibram X Kendi, author of several books including the influential *How to be an Anti-Racist*. UCC leaders have called upon members of all our churches to read this book, including in our Partnership. Our plans are still developing, but you can start reading now. Listen for our plans to be announced. Parents, note he also has a book called *How to RAISE an Anti-Racist*.



## Mission Hills Community Garage Sale

On Saturday morning, April 29, 8 AM – Noon, our church will participate in Mission Hills Annual Garage Sale. No, we won't be selling any of our trash and treasures, instead we are offering a "re-fueling" station for our neighbors, - a place they can stop for a cup of coffee, use our restrooms, and perhaps purchase baked items from our **Bake Sale**. Can you donate home baked items for this fundraiser for our church's Scholarship Fund? You can sign up in Fellowship Hall on Sunday April 2, or contact Pam Adler, [pamadler2@gmail.com](mailto:pamadler2@gmail.com) or (703)945-9644.



*This will be a great opportunity to offer some UCC hospitality to our neighbors and help replenish our scholarship fund.*

## The Results are in!

During March, Faith Formation surveyed Parents, Teachers, Church Council and Sunday School Children about the new activities and programs that MHUCC began last September. Here is a synopsis of the results:

### **KEY LEARNINGS:**

- 1. Children and Youth are viewed as very welcomed and cared for in our Church**
- 2. All groups had a high level of satisfaction with the activities and programs put in place**
- 3. Parents felt the communication process was excellent or good**
- 4. All groups felt that it was important to include social justice activities and/or opportunities**
- 5. People shared new ideas about how to improve and grow the program**

### **COMMENTS FROM PARENTS:**

- ◇ *The children and youth seem more bonded – which is huge. My kids have fun and enjoy coming to church.*
- ◇ *Our children love the adults that lead them, enjoy their time with peer and always look forward to time spent together with MHUCC!*
- ◇ *I feel that the staff and volunteers are very welcoming and take care to ensure all children feel supported and cared for.*
- ◇ *I'm really excited about the added resources to support the Youth Group and Sunday School. It feels like the programs are getting reignited and reimaged*
- ◇ *Fiona and Artcel are awesome new hires brought on by Pastor David*
- ◇ *The youth field trips and outside activities have been meaningful and enlightening for them.*
- ◇ *Teaching them about the importance of helping others and modeling this through many activities in the church*
- ◇ *Keep up the credible work! The momentum is building*

### **COMMENTS FROM TEACHERS**

- ◇ *Our children feel loved and excited for Sunday School activities*
- ◇ *We have engaging activities with high quality adult involvement*
- ◇ *Largest group of committed adults teaching Sunday School in my years at MHUCC.*
- ◇ *I love all the new activities that are bringing more families in and keeping them engaged.*
- ◇ *The increase of opportunities for families to gather and have fun experiences is impressive!*

*(continued on next page)*

## Results are in (*continued*)

### **PEOPLE REALLY LIKE**

- ◇ *The Youth Group and Sunday School*
- ◇ *Participation in Sunday Worship Service*
- ◇ *Incorporating music in Sunday School*
- ◇ *The Advent Celebration and The Christmas Pageant*
- ◇ *Parents' Night Out*
- ◇ *Casas de Luz home build and Fine Dining Fund Raiser*
- ◇ *Celebrity Sunday*
- ◇ *Roar-Snore at Safari Park*
- ◇ *Christmas Carol Camp*
- ◇ *Intergenerational Bonfire*

People also gave ideas to further advance our communication with members, visitors and the community; possible areas for social action and outreach; how parents might get to know each other better.

We are grateful for our Church's support for our work with children, youth and families. And we appreciate the good work of Artcel, Fiona and all of the teachers. THANK YOU!

### **UPCOMING EVENTS**

- ◇ *Easter Pageant – April 9*
- ◇ *Parents' Night Out – April 14*
- ◇ *Field Trip – April 23*
- ◇ *Celebrity Sunday – May 21*
- ◇ *VBS – June 26-30*
- ◇ *Pilgrim Pines Weekend – Oct. 20-22*

The Faith Formation Ministry

## MHUCC Library

With great appreciation for the congregation's contributions to the Mission Hills UCC library over the many years, our library has reached capacity. Quite frankly it is overflowing with your generosity.

Property administration and technology asks that future contributions be donated to your local library branch.

Thank you,  
Steven Nugent



## Hymns and Beer- Saturday, April 22nd- 6:30-8 pm in Fellowship Hall

MHUCC's Fellowship/Membership and Growth Ministry will resume sponsoring a Hymns and Beer evening soon. Come one come all, as Kris Abels, our Director of Instrumental Music accompanies our hymn selections on piano. We'll call out our favorite hymn title, then sing with gusto! Snacks and munchies will be provided with a variety of juice and soda flavors too!

You're invited to bring your own beer to imbibe (if desired) as we sing our favorite hymns together.



## MHUCC Scholarships



Now is the time to prepare your application for the Mission Hills United Church of Christ College Scholarship. Members of the church who are planning to attend college this fall are eligible to receive this scholarship. You may pick up a copy of the application at the church office, or [online](#). The church office must receive applications no later than May 15, 2023.

For more information, please contact Suzanne Albrecht ([suz1127@cox.net](mailto:suz1127@cox.net)).

## Youth Group Upcoming Events

**Friday, April 7, 6pm:** A special guest from the Sierra Service Project will join us to provide more details and answer questions about our summer service trip and we will share dinner (spaghetti and meatballs). Parents invited to join us! Then we will stuff and hide 100's of Easter eggs in preparation for the Great Community Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday.

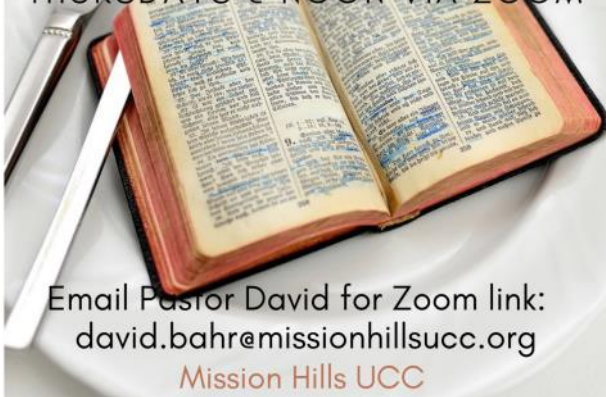


**Sunday, April 9, 10am:** Easter Sunday service, followed by the Great Community Easter Egg Hunt – the Easter Bunny (assisted by the Youth Group) will welcome kids from our Sunday School and from the Mission Hills Community.

**Friday, April 14, 5pm:** Board games in the youth room during the Parents Night Out event. Options including [Pandemic](#), [Forbidden Desert](#), [Exploding Kittens](#), [Magic the Gathering](#), and many more (if playing MTG, please bring cards).

# Lunch & Lectionary

THURSDAYS @ NOON VIA ZOOM



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

Mission Hills UCC

## Sunday 10 am Worship Service

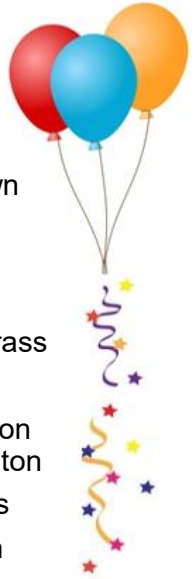
Please join us for worship in person or watch our livestream on [Facebook](#) and our [YouTube](#) Channel.

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](#).

## April Birthdays

Apr 2	Danielle Carlin
Apr 4	Devin Buss
Apr 5	Susan Waller
Apr 6	Alyssa James
Apr 7	Steve McIntee Geri Mu
Apr 8	Samantha Brown Marilyn Miles
Apr 10	Andrew Wolf
Apr 15	Don Taylor Barbara Snodgrass
Apr 18	Guy Halgren
Apr 22	Alyssa Huntington Tommy Huntington
Apr 25	Samantha Pettis
Apr 27	Anne Reichman Sue Lake
Apr 28	Jennifer Hom
April 30	Bettie Cain



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 February Church Council Meeting:

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/FebMinutes.pdf>

## History Corner: Let's Go to the Movies!

Since we have just finished the Academy Awards for 2023, it might be interesting to look back about 100 years. Did you know that in the 1920's, our church showed Hollywood movies for the public, - charging a small fee? In the first 8 months of 1926, we spent \$286 to rent these films, and the receipts were \$318. Council felt that the program would be more successful and attract more non-congregants if we showed "more familiar motion pictures with better known actors." The most popular films of 1926 included the silent films "The General" with Buster Keaton and "Flesh and the Devil" with Greta Garbo. No word on whether these movies were rented.



**Mission Hills United Church of Christ**  
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 (619) 296-2169; Fax (619) 296-2115  
**Website: [www.missionhillsucc.org](http://www.missionhillsucc.org)**

### STAFF DIRECTORY

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Pastor	Rev. Dr. David Bahr	ext. 302	<a href="mailto:David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org">David.Bahr@missionhillsucc.org</a>
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Worship Technologies Coordinator	Saige Afalava		<a href="mailto:Saige.Afalava@missionhillsucc.org">Saige.Afalava@missionhillsucc.org</a>
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**

## Mission Hills UCC - Upcoming Events

April	Mission Partner: Feeding Mission Hills
<u>Sunday, 4/2</u>	Palm Sunday Palm Procession, 9:30 a.m.
<u>Thursday, 4/6</u>	Maundy Thursday Service, noon, Chapel After School Program, 12-4 pm, Fellowship Hall Maundy Thursday Service, 7 pm, Sanctuary & online
<u>Friday, 4/7</u>	Good Friday Service on zoom, noon Youth Group Meeting, 6-9 pm, Youth Lounge
<u>Sunday, 4/9</u>	Easter Sunrise, 6:30 a.m., Pioneer Park Festival Worship, 10 am Easter Egg Hunt, 11:15 am
<u>Thursday, 4/13</u>	After School Program, 12-4 pm, Fellowship Hall
<u>Friday, 4/14</u>	Parent's Night Out, 5-8 pm, Upstairs
<u>Tuesday, 4/18</u>	Feeding Mission Hills Food Distribution, 10:30 am
<u>Thursday, 4/20</u>	After School Program, 12-4 pm, Fellowship Hall
<u>Sunday, 4/23</u>	Earth Day
<u>Thursday, 4/27</u>	After School Program, 12-4 pm, Fellowship Hall
<u>Saturday, 4/29</u>	MH Garage Sale, 8 am – 12 pm
May	Mission Partner: Just in Time
<u>Tuesday, 5/16</u>	Feeding Mission Hills
<u>Sunday, 5/21</u>	Visit by Peppermint Ridge Legacy Sunday
<u>Friday, 5/26</u>	Parents' Night Out, 5-8 PM

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