

PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



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

December 2023

An Abbreviated Advent

We had a wonderful Thanksgiving feast on Commitment Sunday – thanks to lots of volunteers, including Chef Robin, and an overflowing potluck. Thank you! We received many statements about our hopes for MHUCC's impact in 2024 – like increasing opportunities for neighborhood children, better living for people in their 8th decade, and dedicating ourselves to influence public policy on issues that affect people living in poverty, the environment, and more. We also received many pledges of financial support. If we have not received yours yet, here's a handy [link](#).

And now Advent begins – first with the lighting of the Hope candle this Sunday, **December 3**, and an All Generations Celebration from 5-6:30 pm. Join us to eat delicious Filipino food, set up the sanctuary Christmas trees or make crafts, and then sing carols by the light of our trees to begin our abbreviated Advent. It's shorter than usual because the fourth Sunday of Advent falls on Christmas Eve. Because family obligations make our lives extra busy, we decided to combine Advent 4 and our big Christmas Eve service at 10 am Sunday morning, **December 24**. There will be no additional afternoon family service this year – we'll return next year when Christmas Eve is Tuesday. Our late service will be at 8 pm with candlelight, lessons and carols, and communion.

Our six UCC San Diego Partnership Churches will hold a joint Blue Christmas service on Zoom at 6:30 pm on Wednesday, **December 6**. A link will be sent that day. This special service is for those who may find a joyful season difficult because of grief and weariness.

The annual Choir Concert has also been moved this year because of scheduling conflicts with our abbreviated Advent. Instead of Sunday afternoon, the concert will be Saturday, **December 16**, at 6 pm.

The annual Children's Pageant will be during worship on Sunday, **December 17** followed by caroling for the residents at Green Manor. Caroling will involve our youth and children plus the participants at our second annual Christmas Carol

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An Abbreviated Advent (continued)

Camp. You may wonder why we hold Christmas Carol Camp from 1-3 on a Thursday afternoon. It's early release day at Grant School.

Feeding Mission Hills comes right before Christmas, just like it did this year for Thanksgiving – a wonderful opportunity to help families in need for the holidays. If you'd like to help, come at 9 am on Tuesday, **December 19** to see what it's all about.

It's easy to get so busy we forget why this season exists. Thanks to our daily Advent stories written by members, you can start every morning in Advent in the right spirit. If you don't get our daily emails in Advent, contact info@missionhillsucc.org.

Finally, one of my joys of the season is sharing my nativities from around the world. Last year I took them to beaches. This year we have traveled together throughout San Diego – from Rady Shell to the border to Mount Soledad and more. You can see them on Facebook or follow me on Instagram at [@photography_by_david_bahr](https://www.instagram.com/photography_by_david_bahr)

Advent may be abbreviated this year, but there is no shortage of blessings!

Pastor David

Moderator Message

Have you ever been given a gift or purchased something for yourself that was so outstanding that you saved it for a social occasion? It stays tucked away until that time arrives. It's safe and secure while you wait.

I've found the words "I love you" are similar. I've saved those words over the years to say only on special occasions to special people. But now, they just pop out... sometimes unexpectedly,

It started a few years ago when a friend I've known since high school would sign her greeting cards, end a phone conversation, or depart from a visit with "I love you". At first I was a bit uncomfortable as I was saving my "I love you" for family.

But now? not so much. I'm more relaxed with sharing those three words with a wonderful circle of friends. It's a bit risky, I'll admit, Just as I was a uneasy in the beginning, sometimes friends are taken aback. As Pastor David said at the end of his sermon a few weeks ago, throughout history all God has ever wanted from people is love, mutual love, loving each other. And Rev. Janalee Borja reminded us recently that "Mission Hills embodies love" We show it in so many ways. Do we say it? Maybe? You may want to try expanding your "I love you" circle this Christmas season. I've found it most fulfilling.

*Love and blessings,
Jere*

Blue Christmas

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the right is a circular logo with a blue and white design of hands holding a globe, with yellow rays emanating from the top. On the left, white text reads: "A Special Worship for the Weary", "Wednesday, December 6 at 6:30pm on Zoom", "Friends, this service is for you. Bring your grief. Bring your weariness. Bring your fatigue, and allow yourself a quiet space to reflect and draw near to God.", "We hope this service will be a gift to you, providing a space of calm, quiet, and healing. May you find peace in your journey. Please share the invite with any who would find meaning in this service!", and "This is a San Diego Partnership service." at the bottom.

A Special Worship for the Weary

Wednesday,
December 6 at 6:30pm
on Zoom

Friends, this service is for you. Bring your grief. Bring your weariness. Bring your fatigue, and allow yourself a quiet space to reflect and draw near to God.

We hope this service will be a gift to you, providing a space of calm, quiet, and healing. May you find peace in your journey. Please share the invite with any who would find meaning in this service!

This is a San Diego Partnership service.

Our UCC San Diego Partnership churches are hosting a Blue Christmas Service on Zoom, Wednesday, December 6 at 6:30 pm. Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year, which is why it also carries some of our deepest pain. When we are grieving loss, it's hard to experience joy. If that speaks to you, join us for a special worship service that honors our grief and offers us hope. Each of our 6 churches needs to provide a reader. Would you like to be the reader from MUHCC?

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 858 8197 6213

Passcode: TF73fg

Migrant ministry updates and new needs

Our UCC San Diego Partnership churches have been engaged in supporting migrants and asylum seekers who have completed their process to enter this country and are making their way to their final destination. We'd love to invite you to help! There are many ways to make a big difference:

- Do you love baking cookies at this time of year? The asylum seekers arriving at our border are being given sack lunches as they proceed on to their final destination, and the organizers on the ground have specified that homemade and individually bagged cookies would be a wonderful addition to round out the lunches! Funds are available for reimbursement for cookie-making supplies if you'd like.
- There is also the need for day volunteers to help clean mobile showers and staff an overnight shelter at Mid City Nazarene Church.
- We need drivers for airport runs from a location in City Heights (will be shared with volunteers).
- Finally, if you have extra blankets or men's coats, migrants are also being detained in the open in the high desert near Jacumba and are in desperate need of warm layers for the cold desert nights.

If you are able to be on a list to provide this, or want more info, please reach out to Pastor Kelly at kryan@tableucc.com.

Sharing Comfort and Joy

The MHUCC Youth Group created 100 gift bags full of comfort and joy - with fuzzy holiday socks, candy, lip-salve, a scented holiday candle, hot chocolate and tea (and a mug to serve it in) we hope these will brighten the Christmas season for everyone that receives them. Around 75 of these went to the young adults in the Just in Time for Foster Youth Program. They received them at the end of their Thanksgiving Dinner so they could open the bags and start enjoying the contents whenever they feel Christmas begins (some people think it starts on December 1st, others believe it starts on the first Sunday of advent....). The others are destined for home-bound members of our church community and those that find it hard to get out to join us to celebrate in-person.



Youth Group Events

Tuesday evenings at 6pm, starting November 28th, Youth Group Bible Study lead by Artcel Ruiz. Studying the Book of Acts the story of how God took a group of fisherman and commoners and used them to turn the world upside down, and it's got lots of relevance to our lives today.

Friday, December 15, evening: for our holiday event we have been invited to the [El Nido Transitional Living Program](#) to spend time playing games and creating Christmas cards and decorations with children who are currently living at this shelter. We will then share a holiday dinner at a local restaurant.

**Sunday, December 17,
11:30am - 12:30pm:**

Christmas carols at Green Manor with the Sunday school kids. The residents are really looking forward to our visit!



Friday, January 19 (food prep) and Saturday January 20 (serving food): return of the Fine Dining Experience fundraiser in support of our home building project with Casas de Luz in Mexico. We might do Thai food this year?

For more information, please contact [Fiona Case](#).

CHILDREN & FAMILIES MINISTRY



Pilgrim Pines intergenerational weekend was a huge success! We had 82 people (not all simultaneously) with 23 kids and youth. With beautiful weather and fresh mountain air, we had a marvelous time getting to know each other. Thanks to Kristin Brown, Kim Antos, & Meg Conrard for their huge help!

Another intergenerational event, Pumpkin Decorating/ Carving, happened at MHUCC on October 29th. Two families from the Mission Hills community attended. There were a lot of families with kids from our church who also participated. Thank you to Bruce Ramet for reading *The Story of a Pumpkin Pie* by Dr. William Barton.



Upcoming Events:



- December 3
 - ◊ Advent Celebration
- December 17
 - ◊ Christmas Pageant
 - ◊ Caroling at Green Manor
 - ◊ White Elephant Party

For More Information, contact [Artcel Ruiz](#)

Stewardship Campaign



Our formal Stewardship Campaign culminated with Commitment Sunday and our Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 19th. We received almost 60 pledges in person that day in addition to the pledges received on-line or in the office. It's a really good start but we need outstanding pledge cards returned as soon as possible so that we can finalize our budget for next year.

This year's theme, 'Because of YOU our church changes lives.', highlights the importance of your support (financial, time and talents) in helping this church accomplish its mission.

We will include in upcoming Mission Minutes some of what individuals shared on Commitment Sunday as to how our church has changed their life or the life of someone they knew. Those comments reinforced the whole purpose of why we pledge in the first place.

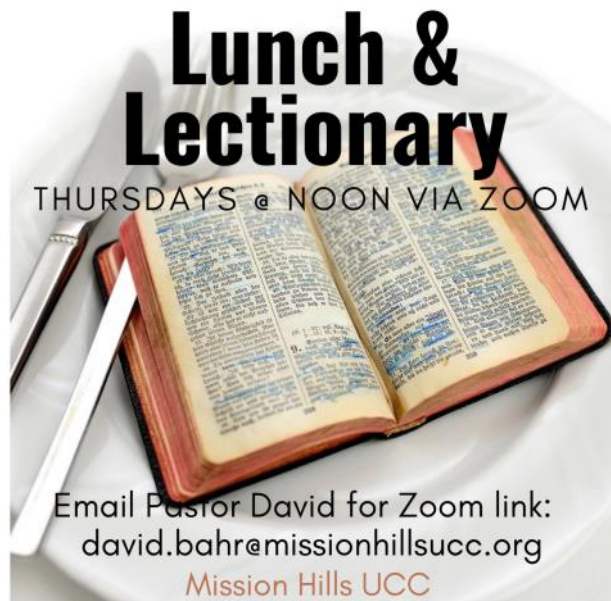
If for any reason you have not turned in a pledge, it is still very much needed to allow us to create a realistic operating budget for next year. Pledges can be made [online](#) or dropping your pledge by the office. If needed, you can call Elizabeth, our administrative assistant, directly at 619-296-2169. You will get a confirmation of your pledge for your personal records in December.

Sign up for the 2024 Mexico Home Build

The Mission Hills UCC Youth Group, families and friends are organizing another mission trip to Mexico to build a family a home, working with [CASAS DE LUZ Saturday, February 17 - Sunday, February 18, 2024](#). We will be framing, painting, roofing, cutting wood and installing electrical circuits 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. You can get a feel for this awesome activity from our [2023 slide show](#) (opens in google drive). Sign up today, and please pay \$70 at the [church donations website \(Youth Trip/Fundraising\)](#), which goes to the church that provides food and accommodation for us in Mexico.



More details and a link to the sign-up form [here](#).



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 5** Elisabeth Koenig
- Dec 6** Judy Carter
- Dec 9** Monica Slev
Andrea Compton
Mia Turner
- Dec 12** Juanita Curtis
- Dec 13** Carol Vaughan
- 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/2023/11/OctMin.pdf>

History Corner

As we enjoy families lighting the Advent Candles each Sunday, here is a look at an Advent Candle lighting ceremony in the late 1940's.



Just a little more formal . . .

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Sexton	Gloria Schacht		
Sunday Nursery	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