

PILGRIM CONGREGATIONALIST



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

November 2023

You Make the Difference

Not all stewardship themes are this clear and true. Our church is changing lives – because of you. Not on your own, of course. And not without divine grace. But it still takes you to act and when we act together – it's the beautiful and vital congregation known as Mission Hills United Church of Christ.

Because of you, there are more kids and youth growing in faith and making a difference in our community than in a long time. Kids who are actually excited about church. We marveled this year at our confirmation students sharing a favorite Bible passage and explaining why. And who can forget when the Sunday School kids put on costumes and explained the meaning of a parable in a way that included all of us. Your generosity makes the difference in our ability to provide an amazing staff with sufficient resources.

Because of you, there are more people singing in the choir and the sound they make is somehow better every week. And more bell ringers too! The music in this church is absolutely amazing and wait until next year when we celebrate the centennial of our organ. We have amazing musicians because your generosity makes the difference.

Because of you, groups have a place to meet to deal with their diabetes, stay sober, recover from debt, learn how to run a small food business, learn how to garden, put on a theatrical production, provide budding musicians a place to perform, and more things than I even know that happen every week in our historic building. And every group constantly praises the hospitality you make possible through your generosity.

We reached deeper into the community this year with our sponsorship of the Mission Hills Summer Concert Series and engaged with hundreds of kids. We cheered for the Mission Hills 5K runners racing back and forth past the church. We offered a camp for kids to learn Christmas Carols and study science in Vacation Bible School. We looked beyond our neighborhood and when asylum seekers were stranded at the border under the scorching sun, we threw blue tarps across the wall so they could have shade. That, along with your generous contributions to many community partners.

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You Make the Difference *(continued)*

And with our new Minister for Congregational Care providing consistent care and prayer with people in need and at home, we've begun to explore how to build a more comprehensive network of support for older members. Listen for more in the new year and how you can change even more lives.

But here's an example where the church allowed two member's lives to stay the same. About 18 months ago, two of our long-time members found their mobility seriously compromised. We could help them continue to live at home with something as simple as a meal delivered every week that could be used for a few days. You signed up for a meal every few months and it made a difference. It filled a necessary gap that allowed things to stay the same for them – meaning, they could continue to live at home as long as possible. That changed their lives.

I could keep going but let me end by saying thank you for changing my life too. Getting to be your pastor is one of the most wonderful things God has allowed me to do.

*Blessings,
Pastor David*

What is a Pledge and Why

Pledges pay for staff salaries, utilities and insurance, Sunday school curriculum and music, coffee and copier paper, and much more. We budget for all that based on what folks like you pledge for the coming year – whether you are a friend and participant or a member of Mission Hills United Church of Christ. Financial pledges are necessary. We supplement part of our expenses with rentals and endowment proceeds, but without pledge commitments, we would not be able to plan.

If you do not contribute financially to the ministry of the church now, please begin so we can continue to bless our neighbors. You can make a difference.

If you contribute but do not pledge now, please do so that we can plan and stretch to reach our goals for 2024. It is a meaningful commitment.

If you pledge now and have the ability to increase, please stretch. Many others cannot because of rising costs. And our costs are rising too, which is why we are planning to increase staff pay by 3.2% in the new year. Your generosity will make the difference with what we are able to do in 2024.

It takes new pledges, increased pledges, and continued pledges, each of us to the best of our ability, to make it all work to do God's work.

Stewardship is the wise use of all that God gives to each of us – including time, talent, and treasure.

If you would like to talk more about this and how you can participate, ask Pastor David.

Moderator Message

Prayer...What is it? How do we do it? When and Where? And...does it work? A Google search to find the answers to these questions was quite amazing.

Here's just one of the entries

Reduce Stress. Doctors who have studied the physiological effects of prayer have reported that when praying, heart rate and blood pressure decrease, and breathing regulates. ...

Increase Empathy. ...

Build Relationships. ...

Spiritual Exercises.

Emotional Health.

I'm not sure what motivated me to say "YES" to Linda Sommer's invitation that Sunday but regular prayer is now a powerful force in my life.

I'll admit that prayer had not, at that time, been a regular practice in my life. I always said "Thanks God for my blessings today" or "Thanks God for helping me find my lost phone" after several hours of panic. Or a passing prayer for a sick friend. But I don't think I was really talking to God.

I remember my anxiety at my first monthly prayer team meeting on Zoom I shared with the group, "I don't think I know how to do this, what do I say?" They all reassured me that there was no "right way" to pray, just say what's in your heart.

For me prayer has become a private conversation with God, that Almighty presence that is always there. It gives me strength when I need strengthening and it helps me shift my thinking away from what's going on in my life to having more compassion for others who are experiencing sorrow, grief, or fear.

It has deepened my faith more than I could ever have imagined. It has strengthened my relationships and brought joy and comfort to myself and others.

Our congregation has great faith in the prayer team. It's evident by the many requests each week. And to answer the question "Does it work?" Each month when we offer Praise and Thanksgiving for all the healing, we're encouraged to continue.

All are welcome to join the Prayer Team. We are grateful for Linda for her leadership. Her deep faith in the power of prayer has inspired me. In her words, Prayer is a declaration of our dependence on God.

*Love and blessings,
Jere*

New Members

Monica Muñoz is a first generation Filipina-American, who grew up in San Diego (North County), where her parents and younger sister and brother-in-law still reside. She is currently on maternity leave on baby watch (due October 26!), but was working as a Physician Assistant in the field of Occupational Medicine in National City. She ironically enjoys foreign body removal procedures and laceration repairs, but will faint at the sight of her own blood. In her spare time, she can be found watching or listening to true crime documentaries, walking around the neighborhood, or planning and hosting parties for her family and friends. Her sugar cookies and focaccia are crowd favorites!

Isaac Muñoz is a first generation Mexican-American who has lived in Southern California for the majority of his life. He currently teaches audio recording at San Diego State University and is a staff engineer at Qualcomm developing the next generation of audio technologies. His fascination with music technology began as a kid when he heard laser sounds shooting out of electric guitars and made it his goal to understand audio effects. Isaac's path to combining music and engineering was kickstarted when he received the Thomas J. Watson Fellowship which enabled him to travel throughout Latin America building musical instruments. He has continued to travel internationally to showcase live immersive audio streaming experiences and work on prototype microphones. In his spare time, Isaac participates in STEM outreach programs and also enjoys charity bicycle events like Padres Pedal the Cause.



Monica and Isaac met through a mutual friend who Monica went to elementary school with and Isaac met at Qualcomm. Knowing that Monica and Isaac would make a good match, she tried to set them up on date, but Monica took one look at Isaac's Facebook profile picture and said no (Isaac was riding a motorcycle, and Monica detests motorcycles after seeing too many injured motorcyclists when she worked at an Emergency Room). After slowly getting to know each other at their mutual friend's events over the years, Isaac asked Monica out to a casual one-on-one date where he gave her the option of going to the movies or going to a Latin dance club. She chose dancing, and the two have kept on dancing since!

Elisabeth Koenig ~ Pastor Kermit White baptized and confirmed me in the late 1950's in this church, giving me also my first instruction in theology, which would become my vocation. I joined the choir (as did my father) and the youth group, and camped at Pilgrim Pines. Everyone here treated me with kindness, good humor, and respect—all of my memories are happy ones. Now, more than fifty years later, I am filled with joy to return as an associate member. My husband John, an Episcopal priest, attends also. We both were seminary professors in New York City, where we lived for thirty-five years. John's field is New Testament; he also served as Academic Dean and Acting Dean. My specialty is Christian Spirituality; in addition, I taught ethics and theology, and served as Director of Admissions, Housing, and Financial Aid. Today I feel privileged to associate with this UCC, with its creative social justice ministries, its wonderful sermons, music, fellowship, and offerings for children, youth, and families.



New Members *(continued)*



Hi, my name is **Nancy Barrett**, originally from Missouri (or "Misery" as I now pronounce it), but feel like a true Californian as I've been here for 31 years and wouldn't live anywhere else! I was married for over 15 years, but divorced now for more than 25 years. I raised my two daughters Elizabeth and Briana in Claremont in LA County. They are both married to my wonderful sons-in-love, living in Orange County and have each given me two adorable grandsons - Wyatt (almost 6), Hudson (4 1/2), Bentley (3) and Charlie (1 1/2). You'll see them with me at church when I have one of them overnight, which is such a special joy for me.

I moved from the Inland Empire to San Diego almost 4 years ago for a job. I am a RN and currently work for the Naval Special Warfare Command (the Navy Seal community) as a Transition Nurse Case Manager. I helped develop the medical aspect of a program that assists that community in transitioning from military to civilian life. They are a very special group of service members and it is truly an honor to help them (in addition to being the coolest job of my career!). Next year I'm looking forward to semi-retiring by working part-time at my current job which will allow me more time for fun, travel, church involvement and time with my precious little grandsons.

Thank you for welcoming me into the Mission UCC church family!

Next month we will continue with profiles from six more new members who joined in October.

Join Us for Thanksgiving Luncheon to Celebrate and Give Thanks for Our Church Family

Sunday, November 19, following the Church Service

A special thank you to Chef Robin James, who will continue the delicious tradition of being our chef!



Chef Robin will prepare turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, and gravy.

Please bring a dish to share to complete our meal.

Suggested breakdown:

A-G: Salads

H-O: Vegetables

P-Z: Desserts

The Church will provide drinks and rolls.

Please save the date and join us!

Children and Families Ministry

Our children are continuing to learn about Beatitudes. This curriculum teaches about blessings, and to be blessed means to be happy to the fullest and greatly honored. Our Sunday School leaders provide conversations and activities that inspire a more profound understanding and practice of Beatitudes.



On October 9th, Celebrity Sunday, our “celebrity,” Chris Antos, talked about being an Emergency Room Nurse and how others are blessed because of his compassion to serve. The kids had fun spending time with him.

The Children & Families Ministry has worked on the intergenerational crafts for Pilgrim Pines. Seven out of nine of our families are going to Pilgrim Pines. The children, the families, and I are looking forward to have FUN this weekend!

We are also preparing for our Pumpkin Carving/Decorating on October 29th and collaborating with Growth and Fellowship. More to come!

Key events in our 2023 Stewardship Campaign – ‘Because of YOU our church changes lives.’

October 23: Stewardship Materials mailed; if you did not receive these please notify the office.

October 29: Stewardship Moment becomes part of Sunday service for 4 weeks. Leading off was an overview of the campaign objectives and key dates.

November 5: Stewardship Moment highlights our youth with Fiona Case

November 12: Stewardship Moment highlights our staff with Staff Appreciation Sunday

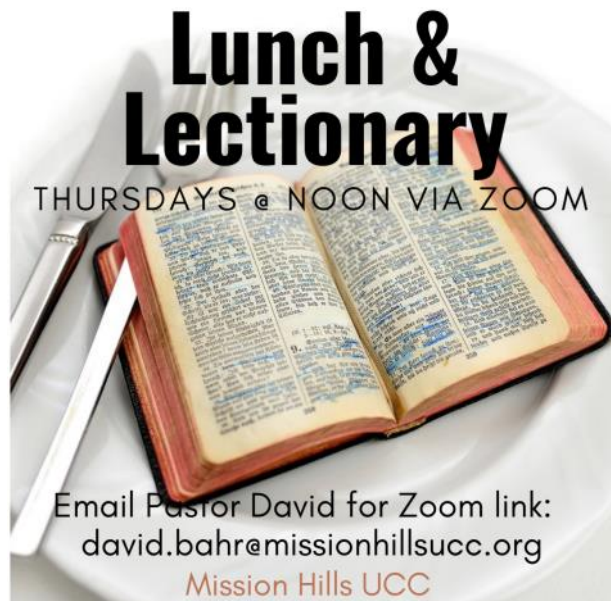
November 19: Commitment Sunday concludes our campaign with Tom Tipps speaking during the Stewardship Moment. Thanksgiving Luncheon will follow in the Social Hall.

If you will not be able to join us for this important event please submit your [pledge card](#) in advance, email David Rickert (rickertd@cox.net) or call the office with your intent for next year.

Our budget is built around the pledges we receive and is a critical part of our planning for the next year. It is exciting to witness the growth and energy that we are experiencing in our church and with your hope to be able to continue this in the new year.

I am grateful for the opportunity to coordinate our stewardship campaign and look forward to your help in making this a success.

David Rickert



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](#).

Meeting Minutes

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

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/SepCouncil.pdf>

November Birthdays

- Nov 1 Jeremy Bloom
- Nov 5 Bruce Matthias
- Nov 6 Valerie Dock
- Nov 7 Michelle Gealy
- Nov 9 Marybeth Holliday
Logan Hollis
Cameron Hollis
- Nov 13 Heidi Jimenez
Ben Case
- Nov 14 Judith Sandven
- Nov 15 Laurie Lindberg
- Nov 16 Susan Shurin
Gail Richmond
- Nov 17 Ron Kennihan
- Nov 23 Kenzie Leudtke
Cole Leudtke
- Nov 27 Suzanne Albrecht
- Nov 29 Chad Berman
- Nov 30 Lois Maki
Lauren Wong



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

Happy Birthday!

History Corner: BYLAWS – OLD AND NEW

At a special congregational meeting on Oct. 8, 2023, we approved a revision of our By-laws, establishing a new Governance structure for our church. Thank you to the task force who worked so diligently over the past 7 months to develop this structure. Over the years, there have been other revisions as the church has grown and adapted to changing times. In 1911, when our church was first formed, the officers of the church were "a Minister, a Clerk, a Treasurer, three Deacons, three Deaconesses, five trustees, and the President of the Women's Society and the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor. These, together with the Superintendent of the Union Bible School, constituted a Minister's Council." We trust that today's Council and the new Governance structure will serve us well in this 21st century. Here is the link to the Revised Bylaws:

<https://missionhillsucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/bylawsrevision.pdf>

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Position	Staff Member	Phone Ext.	Email
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Minister for Congregational Care	Rev. Janalee Borja		Janalee.Borja@missionhillsucc.org
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Sunday Nursery	Jianna Ruiz		

General information

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News subscriptions & submissions (due on the 20th)

news@missionhillsucc.org

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