



# West LA Connections

A Publication of West Los Angeles United Methodist Church

**West LA United Methodist Church**

1913 Purdue Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90025

310-479-1379, westlaumc@gmail.com, www.wlaumc.com

*January 2021*



## The Good News of Luke's Gospel

Each of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—reflects the author's context and the community to which he is writing. The four Gospel writers have their own writing style and perspective on the life and ministry of Jesus. Taken together, they create a broad understanding of Christ's purpose and message for the world. Yet, read individually, we can see particular themes that each Gospel writer wants to emphasize.

As we enter the new year, our worship services will be focusing on Luke's Gospel. Luke, who is understood to also be the author of The Book of Acts, highlights several themes in Jesus' ministry. To begin, Luke tells stories of angels appearing to the older Zechariah, the young Mary, and the humble shepherds in the field, thereby letting us know that Jesus has come into this world as the Savior for *everyone*, including those who are old, young, and living on the margins of society.

Luke's Gospel is filled with an awareness that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise for a Messiah. This is evident in Luke, chapter 4, when Jesus begins his public ministry in the Temple, reading from Isaiah, stating that he has been anointed "to preach good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free." Upon rolling up the scroll, Jesus states that, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus is the one who can and will do these things!

In Luke's Gospel, Jesus loves to eat! Jesus is forever talking about fig trees, mustard seeds, yeast, and salt. He eats with tax collectors, Pharisees, the wealthy and the poor, at banquets, in groups of 5,000+, a small gathering of twelve, and with two men with whom he walked to Emmaus. This Gospel lets us know that table fellowship and breaking bread with others is a foretaste of heaven.

Like each of the Gospels, but particularly in Luke, Jesus' followers are to *listen* carefully and then *act* on what is heard. Jesus' parables provide numerous examples of how people are to live in response to God's love.

As we begin this extended study of Luke's Gospel, you may want to take the time to read through the Gospel in its entirety. Look for themes that reflect what Luke believes are Jesus' core messages for humanity. Then, when *listening* to worship, consider how you will *act* in response to God's call in your life.

In Christ,

*Rev. Janet*

### Sunday Worship Services

Please view weekly worship services online at [wlaumc.com](http://wlaumc.com).

### Church Office Open

Mon-Thurs 9:00 am-1:00 pm  
or call the Church Office at 310-479-1379 to speak to the pastors.

### Staff

#### **Rev. Gary Oba**

Senior Pastor  
[obagary@gmail.com](mailto:obagary@gmail.com)

#### **Rev. Janet Cromwell**

Associate Pastor  
[jlcromwell8@gmail.com](mailto:jlcromwell8@gmail.com)

#### **Rev. Rebecca Hirata**

Local Pastor  
Japanese Language Ministry  
[beckyhirata@gmail.com](mailto:beckyhirata@gmail.com)

#### **Rev. Dr. Richard Kuyama**

Pastor Emeritus  
[ykuyama@roadrunner.com](mailto:ykuyama@roadrunner.com)

#### **Ms. Midori Tashiro**

Administrative Assistant  
[westlaumc@gmail.com](mailto:westlaumc@gmail.com)

### Our Mission Statement

*Growing More  
Christlike Together*

*West LA UMC is a Reconciling  
Congregation, welcoming all  
persons regardless of sexual  
orientation or gender identity.*

## ***Prayers for Members, Friends, and the World***

### **We rejoice and give God thanks for:**

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- All of the caregivers who are lovingly caring for family members and friends.
- Doctors, nurses, and other front-line workers during this dramatic increase of Covid-19 infections in the U.S. and around the globe. May God watch over them and keep them healthy.
- Church members who have generously donated grocery gift cards for those in need.

### **We pray for those seeking healing and comfort:**

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- The many individuals who are experiencing depression and loneliness during this pandemic. Please reach out to others, keep in contact, and raise one another's spirits.
- The increasing number of persons who are facing poverty and hunger due to loss of jobs.
- Health and safety for all of our church members, families, friends, and neighbors.

### **Prayer Requests:**

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*For a complete list of Prayer Requests, please contact the Church Office.*

*If you wish to add or remove a prayer request,  
please contact the pastors at 310-479-1379.*

*Let us pray for you and your loved ones.*

### **UPLIFT Wednesday Prayer Gathering**

Wednesdays, 7:00 PM, on Zoom

New members are invited to join the UPLIFT Prayer Gathering on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 PM via Zoom. It is a joy to check-in, discuss the scripture lesson for the upcoming Sunday, and pray together. Contact either Jeri Okamoto-Tanaka or Rev. Janet Cromwell for more information and the Zoom link.

### **Special Offerings and Memorial Offerings**

For a full list of offerings, please contact the Church Office. The names and gifts are not included in the online version of the Newsletter to protect privacy.

## English Worship Services in January

Please go to the church website  
([www.wlaumc.com](http://www.wlaumc.com))  
to view the worship services.

### **January 3—Epiphany Sunday**

Spiritual Communion  
Rev. Gary Oba preaching.  
Luke 2:41-52  
Jesus in the temple at age  
twelve.

### **January 10**

Rev. Gary Oba preaching.  
Luke 3: 1-22  
John baptizes, proclaims bear  
fruit worthy of repentance.

### **January 17**

Rev. Gary Oba preaching.  
Luke 4:14-30  
Sermon at Nazareth (Isaiah  
fulfilled, Elijah and widow,  
Elisha and Naaman).

### **January 24**

Rev. Gary Oba preaching.  
Luke 5:1-11  
Great catch of fish, Peter will  
fish for people.

### **January 31**

Rev. Gary Oba preaching.  
Luke 6:1-16  
Son of Man is Lord of the  
Sabbath (plucking grain,  
healing a man) and call of  
disciples.

## Email Prayer Group

If you would like to stay informed of prayer concerns for the church please join our new WLA UMC Prayer Group. You may request to join by signing into Google Groups, entering the group name and selecting "Join group", or by contacting the Church Office at 310-479-1379.

## Ohana: Families with Young Children

Saturday, January 9, 9:30 AM, via Zoom

Our Ohana families will gather via Zoom on January 9 to talk about the New Year and New Beginnings. We all need fresh starts, so let consider what we want to begin in 2021.

Please RSVP to me by January 4 if you plan to attend. We look forward to beginning the new year together!

*Jane Shimotsu*

## Fellowship Time

Sunday, January 10, 3:00 PM, via Zoom

Let's keep in touch by coming together for Fellowship Time on January 10!

You are invited to the Zoom Fellowship Time, beginning at 3:00 PM. We will see and catch up with one another, pray, and talk about what is happening at church. The Zoom information will be contained in the January 10 morning email announcement, or by contacting Rev. Janet by email or at the church, 310-479-1379 ext. 102.



## Sharing with Others

Throughout January, the church continues to accept grocery gift cards in the amounts of \$25 and \$50 to give to persons in need, primarily those related to our congregation, and then to organizations we support. Those who wish to participate can mail gift cards to the church, simply marked "Gift".



## And if you need assistance

If you are not working, not getting a paycheck, struggling to make ends meet, or running out of food or necessities, please don't let yourself or your family go to sleep with an empty stomach.

Please private message one of the pastors, and grocery gift cards will be mailed or delivered to you. No one will ever know. We all understand that everyone has been in a tough position at some point in their lives. It is important to ask for help. Our church family is here to help each other during this challenging time.

*Ken Ho*  
Missions Committee

## Japanese Ministry

「新年」

明けましておめでとうございます！今年もよろしく申し上げます。主に大きな期待をもって、新しい年を迎えたでしょうか。「主があなたを祝福し、あなたを守られますように。主が御顔をあなたに照らし、あなたを恵まれますように。主が御顔をあなたに向け、あなたに平安を与えられますように。」（民数記6:24-26）主の祝福、守り、恵みと平安を祈り願う年を迎えたいと思います。

Happy New Year! I would like to start this year with great expectation in the Lord. My prayer goes to our brothers and sisters: "The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace." (Numbers 6:24-26) Our Lord is Good! 平田

1月9日（土）新年弁当

コロナ問題で外出自粛が続きます。教会では新年をお祝いしてシニアのメンバーにお弁当を届けます。ご希望の方は教会オフィスまでご連絡ください。

Café Aloha Senior Lunch Bento delivery on January 9 (Saturday)

Café Aloha ministry would like to reach out to seniors 70 and older by delivering New Year celebration bento. If you are interested in receiving bento, please contact the Church Office.

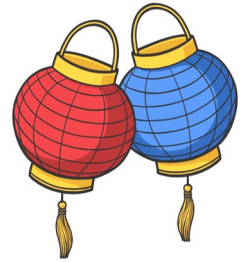
メニュー：おでん、菓子、フルーツ

Menu: Oden, Kashi, Fruits

### Thank You Messages for Thanksgiving Bento

Thank you to all volunteers and people for your thoughtfulness and time spent in preparing Thanksgiving dinner for members of WLAUMC. In appreciation of this blessing, a small offering to WLAUMC. Have a wonderful and healthy 2020 Thanksgiving day and always.

— Masakoi Yotsukura, Loreta Gines, Mr. & Mrs. Sadao Yotsukura



Happy Thanksgiving, WLA United Methodist Church. Thank you for a delicious dinner! — Max & Saeko Zirkelbach



### Donate via your Smartphone

You can give your offering through your smartphone by using Vanco's "Give+" app. Through the app you can make one-time or recurring donations using your debit or credit card or checking/savings account. Download the FREE app by searching your phone's app store for "GivePlus Church."

Thanks to everyone who supports the church's many ministries through the online Vanco link on the church website or by mailing a donation to the church.

### 2021 Stewardship Campaign

By now you may have received a letter inviting your pledge of financial support for 2021. Your pledge will help our Finance Committee manage the church's budget for the coming year. Pledges account for over 70% of the annual budget of \$551,600.

We invite your prayerful consideration of this spiritual commitment. Please respond by returning your pledge cards by December 31. For further information, please email our pledge secretary, Harriet Woo, at [wlaumcpledge@gmail.com](mailto:wlaumcpledge@gmail.com) or text 310-827-3101. Thank you for your support.

*The Finance Committee*

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# HAPPY New Year

Without a doubt, we are all looking forward to the New Year 2021! We are ready to let go of the past year and strife it brought — the unimaginable pandemic, grievous loss of life, loss of jobs and businesses, increased hunger and poverty, deep divisions in our nation, and much more.

As people of faith, we hold onto hope for a brighter future in which vaccines save lives, health is restored, businesses reopen, food is available for all who need it, the wealth gap is tightened, equality is established, and civility and unity become priorities. This is the hope and movement that Jesus taught and preached. It is what God's reign of justice and truth could look like on earth.

But God can't do it alone. God has entrusted us to be helpers in this mission!

With Jesus as our guide, may each one of us recommit our lives to faithful discipleship so that God's reign might become a bit more of a reality in this new year. The Lord knows that we all desire a better future for our families, friends, nation, and world. Let's be the hope that we so desire!

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*You can also view this newsletter online at  
[www.wlaumc.com](http://www.wlaumc.com)*

**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

**JANUARY 2021**

**1913 Purdue Avenue  
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**West Los Angeles United Methodist Church**

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