



West Los Angeles United Methodist Church
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West Los Angeles UMC welcomes all persons
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West LA Connections™

West Los Angeles United Methodist Church Monthly Newsletter | February Issue

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FEB. 2025

February 2025 Pastor's Reflection

Dear WLAUMC members and friends,

So much has taken place since our last December-January newsletter issue was sent out at the end of November 2024: 1. An amazing Tri-Church (Centenary, Faith & WLAUMC) Okaeri/Reconciling Ministries event showing the film 1946 with researcher Ed Oxford, film writer & producer Sharon "Rocky" Roggio, and President of Claremont School of Theology UMC Bishop Grant Hagiya; 2. Our United Women in Faith Holiday Boutique & Craft Sale, 3. Participation in the LA Food Bank outreach to the unhoused; 4. Ornament Making & Advent/Christmas decorating activities; 5. Thanksgiving dinner outreach and dinner by our Nichigo; 6. Special Thanksgiving & "I Remember You" worship; 7. A blessed WLAUMC Charge Conference with our District Superintendent Rev. Dr. Siosaia Tu'itahi; 8. Christmas gatherings & parties (Senior Fun, Grief Support, So. Cal. UMC Japanese Caucus dinner, WLAUMC Staff Christmas party, UWF Christmas luncheon, LYNX gathering, Next Gen Christmas Cookie decorating party, etc.) 9. Stewardship Campaign (Gregg Omori, Kay & Rich Yang sharing); 10. Wonderful Advent & Christmas services; 11. Our Joint Worship & Potluck luncheon to celebrate the start of a new year! These were all wonderful opportunities for our community to come together and celebrate.

And also in the midst of all of that joyous activity there were also much sadness experienced as well; the passing of many beloved church members and friends whom we shall ever be grateful for their contributions and devotion to our church. We move forward in ministry strengthened by the past that these persons have so greatly contributed to.

Perhaps as this new year has begun we may have already harbored great concerns or hopes for the new year such as the beginning of a new presidency and administration and what that might mean for the nation as this new administration assumes leadership. And who would have known that our Los Angeles area would be ravaged by so many devastating fires as we began the new year.

As I am writing this Pastor's Reflection (Jan 14), the news was reporting that the Palisades Fire had already scorched over 23,700 acres. The Eaton fire has burned over 14,000 acres. Together all fires combined have amounted to the destruction of over 12,000 structures (which includes homes, businesses, churches & temples). Tragically 25 people have been killed thus far and many persons have been unaccounted for. A staggering 88,000 people having had to evacuate their homes in the areas destroyed by fire and potential evacuation zones. Newscasters are reporting that these LA fires are the most devastating fires in US history. The Palisades fire caused some of our church leaders to meet on Zoom to talk about what irreplaceable items that we might need to remove for safe keeping in the event that a mandatory evacuation might be called. We photographed all of our belongings in every room for potential insurance claims. Thankfully as I am writing this pastoral letter now, I feel our area is still safe from the fires and hopefully will continue to be. The air quality due to the smoke has been of concern and we have experienced periodic power outages and water quality and flow



Rev. Keith Inouye

concerns but these are minor problems that pale in comparison to the scope of the devastation that the fires have destroyed in nearby areas.

We remind ourselves that what is far more important than the material items of our church however is the thousands of people who are suffering immensely in their losses. Our hearts go out to all who are hurting in these days! We pray for the firefighters, first responders, mental health care professionals and so many others who are actively working with deep compassion and concern in evacuation shelters and managing services and resources to those who need it the most.

Whenever a crisis occurs we often see the worst and the best in people brought out. The news continually reports and warns of looters and scammers who would take advantage of the situation. This is indeed discouraging and maddening. But we have seen the best as well. I pray that indeed the best of us is brought out and that there is more genuine compassion and care extended to others than ill will and action. At times like these, coming together in community motivated by a genuine spirit of compassion is most needed. We see it happening now. It is refreshing and restores our faith in humanity. Faith communities such as ours, I trust, can and will step up to be hope and help to those in need. We are and will continue to collect funds to provide monetary support to the relief work through our UMC Cal-Pac Conference to areas of need. Checks may be made payable to: WLAUMC but please earmark them for "LA Fire Relief". Please as faithfully as you are able.

Dear friends, by the time you receive this newsletter, our nation will be under the leadership of a new president and administration. I expect that we will quickly see what direction our nation will take and what principles and beliefs our new administration will be guided by. Let us hope and pray that we as a nation will be a nation that cares for all; especially those who are most vulnerable and disenfranchised. Christ's church has an important role along with other faith traditions to embody love and compassion. We believe that God calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves and therefore we have a responsibility to work toward greater equality, civil rights, social justice, environmental care, and human decency. We know that recovering from the Los Angeles fires will be a long road which will certainly take many years.

There is much that is troubling happening in the nation and world indeed but we can be a part of the healing. We must be a part of the healing. Scripture constantly reminds us "Be not afraid." I believe this is God's message to us now. Much work is before us but I believe we are called "for such a time as this." (Esther 4:14) Please pray. Please get involved. Please make a difference and please do not hesitate to let us know if YOU are one of the hurting that stand in need. Let us rely upon each other to get through and move forward.

May God in Jesus Christ forever be our guide,

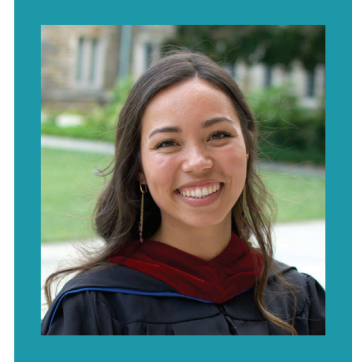
Rev. Keith

Staff News | Sonia Dixon, SPRC Chair

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee has received and accepted the resignation of Joy Cha whose last day with January 10. We are all sad to see Joy leave, as she helped to make our church office more efficient and current over the last two years, as well as always made everyone feel welcomed and supported. Thankfully Joy's full-time remote church office position allows her to stay in our WLA neighborhood, so we hope she will continue to be a part of our faith community. We all wish Joy the best and will miss her!

To keep our busy church life in order and running as usual with Joy's departure, we are thankful that Kiana Hertogh-Nicholson has agreed to expand her responsibilities as Administrative Assistant, in addition to her Next Gen Ministries Director work. Kiana will be in the office daily Tuesday-Friday from 8:30am-12:30pm to assist our staff and church members, so please don't hesitate to contact the office should you have any questions. Mondays our office will be closed.

Please join us in congratulating Kiana as we truly appreciate her accepting this position and know she will do a fantastic job!



Social Justice Committee Update | Jeri Okamoto-Tanaka

Dear Friends,

Kiana Hertogh-Nicholson and I are looking forward to serving as the new Co-Chairs of the Social Justice Committee. Thank you again to Mark Holmes and Helen Chang for their leadership these past several years and for their continuing participation and wise counsel. Cooke Sunoo also brings his years of leadership of this team and each of you also has a depth of experience and interests.

There is never a shortage of issues and needs on which this group can focus but, as we begin this new year, our communities are faced with the tragedy of the fires that have caused so much destruction in our neighboring Palisades community, and in the San Gabriel and San Fernando Valleys. This is a traumatizing event for the thousands who have evacuated and the many who lost homes, schools, places of worship, and livelihoods. Many may be in a place of lost hope. This is where we may serve -- starting with any in our congregation and extended church family who may be in immediate need.

Kiana and I are gathering information about people and places in need of service and donations (monetary and in-kind).

To begin, we would like to meet in person on Sunday, February 2, at noon (after the UMW meeting) with lunch at church. We will discuss fire relief, our ongoing commitments, and set priorities for the year. We can also discuss how we may collaborate with other church committees and ministries. If you are interested in any of these topics, please join us!



Children's New Year "Kodomo" Coloring Contest!

The WLA Japanese Language Congregation has invited our God's Garden children to participate in a Coloring Contest to celebrate the New Year!

Join in the fun! Pick up a coloring picture in your classroom! Please note the following schedule

Sunday, January 12: Pick up a coloring page

Sunday, January 19: Turn in your coloring page (leave in the classroom or give to Ms. Viki)

Sunday, February 2: Announcement of winners

Sunday, February 9: Winners will receive gifts!

Winners receive "otoshidama" (small gift card to buy kashi-which is a Japanese tradition for children on New Year's Day) All participants will receive a "Kashi."

Have fun coloring!

God's Garden Valentine's Day Party (aka Parent's Date Night!)

February 8 (5:00 pm-8:30 pm)

Parents, make your reservations now to have an early Valentine's Day celebration! The youth will watch the kiddos! They are planning an evening of Valentine's Day themed activities so parents can have a quiet dinner to themselves! A simple dinner for the kids will also be served with heart shaped fun!

SEEDS: Stewardship, Education, Enrichment & Discovery

The Sacrament of Communion

February 23 (10:45 am-1:00 pm)

Children in 1st grade on up will have the opportunity to explore the Christian tradition of communion in the church. What's this all about? Learn the history, meaning and symbolism of communion. We will also make unleavened bread-the bread of Jesus day! We will bake and freeze it to be served for communion the following Sunday!

Please RSVP to Viki Inouye for a lunch count and to order participation pins!



LINX Youth Ministry: The Journey of Confirmation

Confirmation is a special time for self-reflection and to ponder the question of faith, and its relevance to one's life journey. It is a personal experience through study, prayer and discussions with the confirmation community, pastors and mentors. It is a time to be open to explore and discover what it means to be a Christian and member of the church.

The LINX youth has begun the journey of confirmation in a 6 meeting plus an overnight retreat.
February class dates are: February 8 (West LA) and 22 (Centenary)

At the end of the program, youth confirmands will have the personal decision to become a member of their local church.

Save the Date for Asian Camp 2025! June 29–July 4, 2025

Calling all college and young adults to consider serving as a summer camp counselor at Asian Camp! Asian Camp is a very special and sacred place for all who participate. The counselor experience is fun and rewarding and can be transformative to one's personal and spiritual growth! Please consider this opportunity to join the supportive fellowship of the Asian Camp community.

Check out the camp website for more information and training dates. Questions? Contact Viki Inouye or the 2025 Directing Team by email (provided on the website: njaumccamps.org).

After a wonderful Asian Camp 50th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon, evening "Meet Ups" and a moving Anniversary Worship Service at West Los Angeles UMC, it is clear the impact of the Asian Camp experience has had on so many lives. From life-long friendships, personal growth and transformation to a call into ministry; the spirit and blessing of Asian Camp has been powerful, inspirational and life changing.

We look toward to the future of camp with much hope in the faith formation of our young people and the vitality it can bring in leadership and involvement to our local churches.

Please help spread the dates for Asian Camp 2025 with your youth and college age families, scout troops and keep in mind for your summer planning.

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



ASIAN AMERICAN SUMMER CAMP

Camp Wrightwood United Methodist Camp
(San Gabriel mountains, Southern CA.)
1401 Linnet Rd.
Wrightwood, CA. 92397.

Asian Camp is open to current 6th Graders
through
High School Seniors.

WLA UMC Women in Faith 2024 Holiday Boutique Update Sonia Dixon

Our annual UWF Holiday Boutique held on Saturday, November 16th was a huge success because of all the women and friends who supported us with beautifully handcrafted items that included, holiday wreaths, Afghans, embroidered t-shirts, aprons, jewelry, eco-friendly re-usable cloth bags, potholders, origami crane ornaments, and so much more.

We are also so grateful for all the delicious homemade baked items provided by our many talented bakers as well as WLA UMC UWF Chirashi, takuan and radish tsukemono, Chinese Chicken Salad provided by Feast from the East, spam musubi provided by Rutt's Hawaiian Café & Catering in addition to Kenji's yummy salsa!

We were blessed that day with good fall weather, holiday music in the courtyard and customers that were excited and supportive of our hard work and efforts to host a joyful and welcoming boutique sale! We are so appreciative to all who came to support our event where all proceeds will benefit women, children and young adults organizations.

We look forward to our 2025 Holiday Boutique and invite new ideas for handcrafted items, participation in our crafting workshops, and the opportunity to see our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and guests find their holiday gifts and purchases!

Special Thank You:

Poinsettia Adornment Kazie Kame

Thank you to all who donated poinsettias that adorned our Sanctuary for our Christmas Sunday service.

Special thank you to: Chris Kohler, Marilyn Fujii, Joli Kishi, Joy Cha for helping with the delivery and beautifully decorating the Sanctuary.

A big Thank You to Rev. Keith for watering the poinsettias mid-week since delivery was earlier this year.

Thank you all again.

Holiday Service Opportunity:

LA Regional Food Bank Mark Holmes

On Saturday, November 23rd, five members of the church's Social and Environmental Justice and Missions Committee volunteered with the LA Regional Food Bank in south Los Angeles to organize vegetables to be given out as part of food packages to needy families in the area.

Our team assisted in the sorting of a total of 46,702 pounds of produce during our 2.5 hour shift.

Thanks to everyone who came out to fight hunger!



SAVE THE DATES!

SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY

Sunday, February 9, 2025

Mark your calendars! On Sunday, February 9 after English worship, our community will gather for SOUPER Bowl Sunday, our annual Soup fundraiser. Invite your friends and family to attend for delicious soup, all for a good cause. All proceeds from this fundraiser will go toward LA County Wildfire Relief. To volunteer, please contact Jeri: jotwlaumc@gmail.com.



Antique Store & Yard, Bake, and Plant Sale!

Saturday, May 10, 2025

Thank you to all of you who have volunteered to make our past sales wildly successful. We are grateful for the wonderful, highly sellable treasures & "junque" you and your friends donate every year. Without your merchandise, we would not have a sale. But it is thanks to the fellowship and fun of our 100+ mighty volunteers working over 1,000 hours (!) last year who created the lasting connections and special impact of our fundraiser.

So as you begin your 2025, please:

Save the Dates:

- Donations: May 4-9
- Sale Day: Saturday May 10

Volunteer:

- Contact Kay Yang at knyang1016@gmail.com, or call the church office (310) 479-1379

Donate merchandise:

- Start saving items to donate, and think about what favorite recipe you would like to share at the bake sale!

Thank you!

Antique Store, Yard & Bake & Plant Sale Committee

Elaine, Jane, Kay, Steve



February Dates:



Grief Support Group Special Lunch! - Thursday, February 13, 11:30am

Because Valentine's Day is so close to the date of our next Grief Support Group gathering, we will gather on Thursday Feb 13th at 11:30am and make it a "Day Before Valentine's Day Luncheon" at **U-Zen Japanese Restaurant**. It will be a blessed occasion to give God thanks for the love and support we receive and give to one another as a support group!

U-Zen Japanese restaurant is located at **11951 Santa Monica Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90025**. Please RSVP to Rev. Keith at (408) 355-0837 cell so that he can inform the restaurant as to how large our group will be.



Thursday Breakfast Bunch- February 6, 8am

Our next Thursday Breakfast Bunch gathering will be on February 6th at our regular breakfast hang-out: Marie Callender's near the corner of Sawtelle Avenue and National Avenues (11324 National Blvd, Los Angeles, CA). As always we gather at 8am sharp! If you need a ride, we will do our best to try to provide transportation for you so please call Rev. Keith at (408) 355-0837 cell so he can coordinate transportation. This is always a welcome opportunity for us to get to know each other, enjoy each other's company, and share a meal together. Please join us. If you are able please RSVP to Rev. Keith but know that you can just show up as well. All are welcome!



Senior Fun Day - Friday, February 21, 10am to 2pm

On November 22nd we had a fun time playing a new game called The UZZLE! Susan Nakashima was our chef extraordinaire who made us a delicious salmon lunch with ramen salad and edamame and rice! It was delicious! And on December 13th we had a potluck Christmas party Senior Fun Day! We had a contest drawing a snowman scene on paper plates on our heads, a few Christmas team games and wow! What a spread of great potluck dishes!

Seniors please come out to church on **February 21st at 10am** as we gather for our next Senior Fun Day in the church Social Hall! As always lunch will be provided so we ask that you please RSVP so we can prepare the appropriate amount of food! Contact Rev. Keith if you need help with transportation to and from the church.



A Note from Café Aloha Carole Nakano, Member Care

Akemashite Omedeto Gozaimasu

Member Care has maintained a steady flow of sending out Get-Well, Happy Birthday, Sympathy, Thinking of You and Congratulatory cards. In 2024 we celebrated two women who turned 100+ years young. What a wonderful blessing to be able to send out approximately 60-70 Christmas cards to our older adults within the US and Japan.

Café Aloha held its third and last "In-Person" luncheon on December 7th in the social hall. We had 8-10 older adults join us for singing and, as always, a spiritual message. We also made home deliveries to those unable to attend the in-person lunch. The 2025 Café Aloha bento dates are on the church calendar or call the office for information. Our volunteers are so dedicated to this ministry. For the past five years, they have made the time and effort to be available to deliver the bento's to our older adults and to show God's love.

Café Aloha Senior Lunch Bento Delivery On **February 1 (Saturday)**



NEXT GEN MINISTRIES UPDATE

Kiana Hertogh-Nicholson, Next Gen Ministries Director

If we've been reminded of anything this past month - with all the wildfires, devastation, and political despair - it's that we need each other.

As many of you may know, we are trying to make a focused effort to provide spaces of community and friendship for **college-aged, post-college, and younger adults (30's-40's)**. If you know of someone that would be interested in our mailing list to stay up to date with events and communication for those in these age demographics, please email me at info@wlaumc.com. I'd like to grow our email list so that folks can stay in the loop about our gatherings and events.

A COMMUNITY UPDATE:

In the Fall of 2024, the MidPointers had a potluck dinner, as well as Christmas Cookie Decorating (pictured on the right)!

In January, our college-ministry Alpha Omega met at Faith UMC for a potluck dinner and fellowship. Alpha Omega gatherings are scheduled to happen every other month!

Our MidPointers (inclusive group of anyone late 20's to 40's), met for a game night at a group members house (pictured below)

We continue to be filled with gratitude at the growth of these ministries.

FUTURE GATHERINGS :

MID POINTERS BREWERY HANG: Saturday, February 22nd, 6:30pm at Firestone Brewery

COLLEGE STUDENT DINNER: Friday, February 28th at Kiana and Phifer's home



35th Annual Nichigo Thanksgiving Dinner! | Naoto Tashiro

Wednesday, Nov 27 night (6-10PM), continued to Thanksgiving day, Nov 28, 2024

We baked 3 turkeys +1 Platter of Baked Ham, Real gravy, Candied Yams, Real mash potatoes, Corn & Green Beans Veggies, tossed green salad, Cranberries, and Hot spiced Apple Cider drink! Enclosed are some photos of the cooking and prep teams who prepared dinner for about 35 families to enjoy! Some enjoyed a sit-down dinner and others had a boxed bento delivered!

We also continued the tradition of serving Turkey Zousui Soup after Sunday's Church service.

Blessed day with lots of teamwork!

Our Nichigo Thanksgiving Bento Dinner Team:

Team Leaders: Keiko Takahashi, Rev. Becky Hirata!

Turkey roasting Team: Naoto Tashiro, Adam & Bennett Kim, Remy Kyoichi Abe, Takumi Takasugi.

Cooking and Prep Team: Carole Nakano, Keiko Takahashi, Chieko Takasugi, Emiko Kobayashi, Rev. Becky Hirata, Nagisa Mihara, Toshio, Marina, & Misao Takahashi.

Sunday's Zousui Turkey Soup - Carole Nakano, Toshio & Keiko Takahashi



「新年」

明けましておめでとうございます！今年もよろしくお祈りします。

今年は何年。聖書に出て来るヘビは神様が造ったものの中でも賢い動物。(創世記3:1)しかし、エデンの園で、エバを誘惑し、罪に導くため、悪の象徴とされてしまいます。新約聖書では「ヘビのようにさとく、鳩のように素直でありなさい。」(マタイ10:16)とイエス様が伝道のため、弟子たちを各地へ送り出す時にヘビを用いて語りました。弟子たちは、迫害されることが多く、危険に遭遇し、殺されたりするから、主は私たちに賢く知恵を持つ人であることが大事だと教えられたのです。今年、素直な心を持ち、賢く知恵深い者とされたいと思います。「主よ、私たちが知恵深くなるよう助けてください。あなたの恵みによって安全な所へ導いてください。」

また、新年聖書ぬりえ大会が開催中です。子ども達が楽しんで参加できることを感謝します。さあ、主に特別感謝をもって一年を過ごしましょう！

Akemashite Omedetoo Gozaimasu!(Happy new year!) Kotoshi mo Yoroshiku! (Please be good to each other this year again!) We welcome the New Year with great expectations in the Lord!

The year 2025 is the year of the "Hebi"(snake). The snake is the smart animal that God created (Genesis 3:1). In the Garden of Eden, the snake tempted Eve and succeeded in getting her to sin. Therefore, "hebi" became a symbol of evil. However, in the New Testament, when Jesus sent his disciples out to various places to spread the Gospel, He told them, "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." (Matthew 10:16) Jesus taught them that it is important to be wise like "hebi," because He knew that the disciples would be persecuted, encounter danger, and might even get killed. In 2025, we pray to God "Help us to be wise, and guide us to a place where we'll be safe with Your grace."



Rev. Rebecca Hirata

Currently, we are enjoying the Kodomo New Year Bible story coloring contest. The children participate in this special Oshogatsu event until February to receive "Otoshidama" (New Year money) or special gifts. This is really a blessing from the Lord that we enjoy the church Oshogatsu event! Kansha-shite! (with gratitude)

平田

2月1日(土)バレンタイン弁当

教会ではバレンタインデー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 February 1 (Saturday)

Café Aloha ministry would like to reach out to seniors 70 and older by delivering Valentine's Day bento. If you are interested in receiving bento, please contact Church office.

メニュー：餃子、焼きそば、たこ焼き、味噌汁、菓子、フルーツ

Menu: Gyoza, Yakisoba, Tako-yaki, Miso-soup, Kashi, Fruits





Less is More

Jamie Thierman, Environmental Justice Chair

Lately I've been having a lot of discussions about consumerism and its environmental and social impacts. I believe there are pros and cons to every economic system in the world, but I don't think people would disagree if I say that today's system of capitalism significantly supports and relies upon consumerism. Unfortunately, consumerism supports and relies upon many of the things which we are fighting against: over-consumption of resources, rising greenhouse gases, excess waste, and labor injustice.

The good news is that there are many ways to combat consumerism, and I have been brainstorming several to share with you this year. The first one is: Make it yourself.

Now I understand that few people have the time or desire to make their own clothes, or bread, or soap, etc. But before you next purchase something, you might surprise yourself if you're willing to think outside the box. This just happened to me. I was inspired to grow my own micro greens, and instantly went to the internet to find a micro-green-growing kit. When I saw they all came with a plastic tray and a clear plastic dome, I thought to myself, "don't I have something that will work for that?" Turns out, PF Chang's to-go containers worked perfectly! All I had to do was stab some holes in the bottom. We even had some soil and old seeds on hand, and before you know it, I had a micro-green-growing station set up in my living room (pictured on left, above). I realize PF Chang's containers won't solve everything, but with a little creative thinking, I was able to save \$20, some earthly resources, and a little space.

SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

In-person Services
9:30 AM—English Worship
11:00 AM—Japanese Worship
Online worship at wlaumc.com

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Thursday
8:30am-12:30 pm
or call the Church Office at
310-479-1379
to speak to the staff

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