



MĀNOA VALLEY
CHURCH

Mānoa Connection

Connecting our 'ohana

eNewsletter

September 3, 2025

Pastor Abe's Message

"A Spirituality of Coffee"



There are so many things I love about living in Hawai'i—opening your windows to let the trade winds blow through your house, aunties sending you home with delicious leftovers, neighbors giving you amazing fruit from their trees, the genuine aloha you feel from people in the community . . . In a lot of ways, I feel more at "home" here than anywhere I've lived, even though I've spent longer stretches living elsewhere.

Hawai'i has its own rhythms and seasons, but every year around this time, when late August moves into September, my mind wanders back to Vancouver. During this season in the Pacific Northwest, the seasons shift in obvious ways—the air turns crisp, and the leaves start to change. It's a sign to pull out your favorite long-sleeve shirts, sweaters, sweats, and hoodies . . . a hint that the days will soon become much shorter and a long stretch of rain is on the way. For a little while longer, though, the sun still shows up, and you get to enjoy it in that cool fall air.

On those mornings, I loved sitting with a hot cup of coffee (with a generous pour of whole milk stirred in) as I meditated, reflected, prayed, and prepared for the day ahead. So much so that some nights, I'm embarrassed to say, I would actually go to bed excited for the next day, when I would be able to enjoy another morning coffee (I know, I really need to get out more). My point, I really like coffee . . .

Remembering those times made me reflect on how the things that we have affections for have a way of impacting our lives. The things we enjoy form particular habits in us and pull us toward certain places and people. In Christian history, there have been times when strong feelings for everyday things were treated with suspicion, as if our joy might be a problem. And sure, anything can become a problem if it replaces God. But I wouldn't say our affections are the enemy. I think they are a sign that we were made for something great—we were made to love. As humans, it's part of how God designed us.

Which makes me wonder: do I look forward to meeting with Jesus like I look forward to a good cup of coffee on a cool fall morning in the Pacific Northwest? I think I can confidently say I love Jesus with all my heart, soul, mind, and strength. I'm certain I trust Him with my life. But do I fall asleep eager to meet Him in the morning, to see what He has for me and for the world He loves? Sometimes, yes . . . often, probably not. My point isn't to cause feelings of guilt. Rather, to recognize that I have the capacity for that kind of eager love. If coffee can stir those feelings in me, surely similar desires can be cultivated in me toward Jesus (who is so much better than coffee). It reminds me that I have not yet arrived in my ability to connect with and be in relationship with Jesus—there's definitely room there for me to grow.



Links

[Online Donations](#)

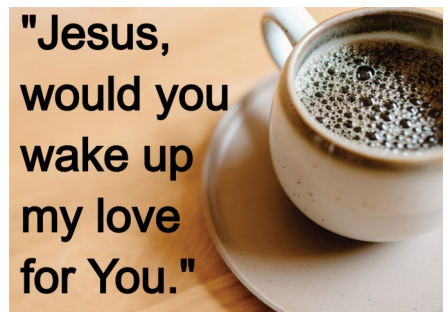
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Now, if you're a coffee person, you also know the deep frustration and angst that a bad first cup of coffee can bring. It can be disappointing and send a person on a mission— for better beans, a better grinder, a different brewing method. To make whatever changes are necessary because . . . taste matters. This made me think about the quality of my time with Jesus. If I'm honest, some days feel rich and alive; other days feel thin, rushed, and lukewarm. Do those latter times send me on a mission? Do I care enough about the quality of my relationship with Jesus to make drastic changes so that I can improve that relationship? Sometimes I do. Many times, I let it slide. What would it take for me to clear space in my life and make an effort to recognize what I already know to be true—that God is so good and faithful, and His mercies are new every morning. What's keeping me from doing those things?

Lastly, in times in life when I discover exceptional coffee beans or a café that makes a great cup of coffee . . . I can't help but tell people. I don't have to come up with a plan or pump myself up to share the news, I just naturally tell people, "You should try these beans," or "You should go to this spot." I share the good news of great coffee. It's like our life with Jesus—when it's rich and wonderful and real, we naturally invite others to "come and see" —not with pressure, just with friendship. Maybe it's through a simple invitation to church. Or maybe offering to pray for a neighbor. It could be sharing a story of how God showed up in your life this week. Regardless, though our relationship with Jesus is personal it's not meant to stay private.

So, as September begins, whether you're a coffee lover like me or find joy in something else, here's my invitation: Before your first sip (or whatever it is for you), say a short prayer: "Jesus, would you wake up my love for You." Give yourself the freedom to linger a little, listen a little, love someone a little. Let your affections point you to the Giver of Life. Let your mornings become a steady, comforting, safe space where God's mercy, love, and grace meet you. And let what you taste spill over to the people all around you.

I'm grateful to be on this journey with you. As Jesus Christ lives in us, may we as a church community be like a wonderful first cup of coffee on a fall morning to all those we encounter in Mānoa Valley and beyond . . .

Christ's Peace, Abe

The Missions Committee Marches On by Sue Yamamoto, Chair



Alisa, Reggie, Pastor Evelin, Sue, Melanie, Inga and Evie,
Missing from the photo are Kathy and Anita.

The Missions Committee is blessed to help our congregation connect and participate in ways that we, as a community of faith, can touch the lives of others. Our amazing committee includes **Sue Yamamoto, Inga Park Okuna, Melanie Ching, Evie Gallagher, Kathy Lee, Alisa Au, Anita Motte and Reggie Tamashiro**. Reggie focuses on leading the Aloha Committee and Inga's focus is on Peace and Justice.

We are grateful to bring lunch to the 65 residents at the Keauhou Shelter once per month. We provide dinner for

families in transition at Family Promise and have gifted them with numerous "Welcome Home" kits for their program graduates moving into permanent housing. We also supplied the St. Pius X Food Pantry with a canned food drive in late July. The Benevolent Fund is administered through the Missions Committee and Pastoral Staff, allowing confidential financial gifts to individuals who demonstrate need.

In addition to these ongoing missions, we have an exciting NEW opportunity to serve! **Pastor Evelin** has been quietly and effectively ministering to residents at a local women's shelter and providing dinner for their Bible Study gathering every Wednesday. We are asking for your support to cover this weekly meal for 6-8 people. To help, please sign up on this [LINK](#) for Wednesday dinners.

We thank the entire MVC community for their ongoing support in bringing our church to the mission field. The Church doesn't have a Mission. Mission has a Church!

Family Promise of Hawai'i Recognizes MVC's Partnership



Inga, Neil, Susan
and Pastor Gwendolyn.

On Saturday, August 23rd, Family Promise hosted a 20th Anniversary Celebration and volunteer appreciation event and recognized Mānoa Valley Church's contributions. **Susan Yamamoto, Pastor Gwendolyn Kirkland, Neil Okuna and Inga Park Okuna** represented MVC. From the many speeches about the history, present, and future of Family Promise of Hawai'i, we learned that last year, 2,045 individuals from 694 families were served and 81% of client families moved into affordable housing. The average stay in the Family Promise program was 68 days and during that time, the families succeeded in averaging an increase of 692% in savings! This year, 1,979 individuals have already been served (694 families). Sadly, Oahu has seen a 14% rise in homelessness between 2022 and 2024, but the increase in families with children rose 20%.

Currently on any given day, there are about 101 families experiencing homelessness in Hawai'i. Family Promise attended the Childhood Homelessness Symposium to discuss solutions and they have a vision that within the next three years, there will be no keiki on the streets. MVC is grateful for the work of Family Promise and is committed to continuing to support their efforts.

The MVC group was surprised when **Inga Park Okuna** was called up to receive a volunteer certificate of appreciation which stated: "in recognition of your generous volunteer efforts in our 'Ohana Nights Program in addition to coordinating for your Church." This gesture was really a recognition of Mānoa Valley Church and the generosity and care we have demonstrated through the years.

Inga receives her
well-deserved certificate.



An Invitation from Family Promise



Inga, Roger, Neil, Carolyn, and
Richelle.

We will be bringing dinner to the parents and children in the Family Promise program on Thursdays: 9/11/25 and 10/9/25. If you would like to share some blessings of food please sign up using these two links: 9/11/25 [LINK](#) and 10/9/25 [LINK](#). You can drop off your food donations at the breezeway by 4:45 pm, but we also have the opportunity to join them for dinner when we bring the food, if we let them know ahead of time. Please feel free to let **Inga Park Okuna** know if you would like to do that so we can reserve a place at the table (up to 4 guests).

Harvest Fair Needs Help with Security and Parking

With the return of White Elephant and the increased amount of goods, the Harvest Fair needs support from volunteers who will keep an eye on the gym and breezeway on Friday, October 31, when booths will set up their displays.

Volunteers are needed only to *monitor* the campus—not to intervene—other than calling 911 if something seems amiss. Depending upon the number of volunteers, the current plan has shifts starting at 9 pm on Friday, October 31st, and at midnight and 3 am on Saturday, November 1st. The intent is to have short shifts to lessen any burden on individuals.

MVC also needs a few volunteers to help manage cars entering the parking lot on Saturday. Shifts start at 8am, 9am, 10am, 11am, and noon.

Please contact **Roger Au** via email at roger.mvc.19@gmail.com if you are interested in helping with this important function.



Give Aloha starts on September 1

September is *Give Aloha* month at Mānoa Valley Church. We have been participating in this Foodland fundraiser since 2010 to support the improvements and maintenance of our campus. Foodland matches a portion of our donations, which was 31% last year. Our five-year Building Fund pledge campaign ended on August 31. With several large capital projects going on now and planned for 2026, we need your help more than ever.

Currently, we are renovating and expanding the cottage so it can be used as a parsonage. Next year we will do rust removal and painting of the gym ceiling and renovation of the Preschool and After School playgrounds. The cost of these projects totals over \$700,000. While we have reserve funds for these projects, we will need to replace what is expended.



From September 1-30 you can go to your nearest Foodland, Sack N Save or Foodland Farms store to make a donation up to \$249. Our organization number is **78558** and you must have a Maika'i card. If you would like your donation recorded on your annual giving statement, ask for a duplicate receipt and place it in the offering bowl. You may also donate online at www.foodland.com.

Art Connection Group's Educational and Inspirational Field Trip

On Saturday, August 16th the **Art Connection Group** took a field trip to the Honolulu Museum of Art (HoMA) to see the Mary Cassatt exhibit. This featured artist was the only successful female Impressionist artist among many males like Claude Monet, Vincent van Gogh, and Paul Cezanne. **Dianne Ishida** explains: "I was very impressed with [Cassatt] being an American and a single woman who lived during times when women were not leading artists. She made such an impact in the art world! Her creativity and ability to incorporate art techniques from other countries in a modern way were amazing! Some of the techniques [she used] were with dangerous chemicals. I loved how her simple strokes created the impression of people doing everyday things."



The exhibit offered a chance to make your own print.

Inga Park Okuna describes how the whole experience was educational and uplifting to their collegial group: "It was especially helpful to have our very knowledgeable teacher **Cat Iwami** with us, as well as the audio guide. Learning about the artist, medium, techniques, and the time period made the exhibit much more meaningful and helped me to appreciate the art on display! I also thoroughly enjoyed being together in person with our class and not just on a Zoom screen."

The group even did a hands-on project—a print image to take home. The Mary Cassatt exhibit will continue at HoMA until October 12th. Go, see, enjoy!



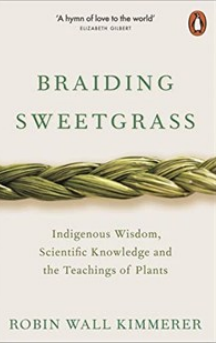
The Art Connection Group visited the Honolulu Museum of Art.

Office Closure and Temporary Hour Modification

The church office will be closed on the week of September 15—September 19. Also, the office will have modified hours starting September 22 until October 16: 8-12pm.



Book Club Selection Highlights “Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants”



Braiding Sweetgrass by Robin Wall Kimmerer was the serendipitous discovery of **Dianne Ishida**, leader of MVC’s Book Club, when she started up a conversation while waiting for her car. The other client, an avid reader, recommended it enthusiastically. This book was a bestseller when it was published in 2015 and remains relevant as the world struggles with climate change, food production, and our relationship with the environment. The author is a member of the Potawatomi tribe and writes: “My work as an ecologist, a writer, a mother, as a traveler between scientific and traditional ways of knowing, grows from the power [of giving thanks to the land]. It reminds me of who we are; it reminds me of our gifts and our responsibility to those gifts.” She discusses nature’s gifts in each chapter such as pecans, strawberries, maple syrup and sweetgrass.

If you are a gardener, interested in botany, or simply concerned about the ecology of our earth, this may be an appealing read for you. MVC’s Book Club plans to discuss it on Sunday, October 5 after worship either in the Upper Room or on Zoom. If you have questions or want to request the Zoom link, please contact **Dianne Ishida** at dianne@hawaii.edu.

MVC Members and Friends Make Sandwich Lunches for 65 Residents at the Keauhou Shelter



Date	Event
Sept 1 – 30	Give Aloha, Foodland fundraiser
Sept 11	Family Promise dinner donation, drop off by 4:45 at the breezeway
Sept 27	Deadline for October eNewsletter articles
Sept 28	Pastoral Relations Committee provide snacks
Oct 5	Book Club meeting after worship either in the Upper Room or on Zoom,
Oct 9	Family Promise dinner donation, drop off by 4:45 at the breezeway