



West Los Angeles United Methodist Church  
1913 Purdue Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90025

Non-Profit Organization  
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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

05/26

## Growing More Christlike Together

West Los Angeles UMC is a Reconciling Congregation and welcomes all persons regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

# West LA Connections™

West Los Angeles United Methodist Church Monthly Newsletter | MAY Issue



MAY  
2026

## SENIOR PASTOR'S REFLECTION

### Friends in Christ,

Did you know that Easter is not just one day, but a season of 50 days? Most of us mark Easter Sunday and move on – but Eastertide invites us into a whole seven weeks of joy, life, and resurrection. If Lent is the season of fasting, then Easter is the season of feasting. And we are still very much in it! Blessings upon you and your loved ones as we journey through this sacred time together.

One of the highlights of this past Lent was our weekly Lenten study. On Wednesday evenings, I had the privilege of hosting young adults at the parsonage for dinner before joining a Zoom meeting with other church members. The in-person group would pass around the computer so we could all be in conversation – a truly hybrid format!

Together, we sat with scripture, explored questions about the life of Jesus, and shared how these ancient words touch our lives today. From Disa's wisdom, to Stacey's encouragement, to the vulnerability of our young adults – all of it felt like a gift from God. Best of all, every week we prayed together. We prayed for you, West LA UMC. We lit candles and asked for God's blessing on this church, on our world, and over all who are hurting.

As I write this note, I am planning another funeral service; this time, for one of our beloved West LA UMC members, Toshie Setoguchi. As we continue in prayer for all in our community and world, let us also take special care to pray for the friends and family of Toshie. May all who grieve in

this Easter Season be comforted by the God who holds us in both life and death.

That spirit of growing together and holding each other in the midst of the world's despair is exactly what I hope carries us forward this Easter season. Just as the flowers around us are coming into bloom, daring to be beautiful in a tumultuous world, I wonder: what might this season of Easter, Spring, and new life open up for you?

As we move through Eastertide, there is a lot we have planned here at church. Whatever this Easter season holds – whether that be our Antique Sale, one of our service projects, or just the natural routine of your life– what I hope most is that you feel known and connected here. You belong to this community, whether you're in the pews or with us in spirit from far away. We are grateful for you and are holding you in our prayers.

Alleluia!

Pastor Kiana Nicholson  
Senior Pastor, West Los Angeles UMC  
4.14.26



West LA UMC Senior Pastor Kiana Nicholson preaches a hopeful message on Easter Sunday, April 5, 2026.



## NICHIGO MINISTRY: PASTOR'S NOTE FROM REV. BECKY

「お祝い月」

4月5日のイースター礼拝は、素晴らしい賛美をくださった主に心より感謝を捧げたい。El Marino Japanese Chorus、バイオリン特別演奏、子どもハンドベルなど、復活の主を褒め称え、礼拝後は愛餐会と子どもエッグハントで盛り上がった。

5月は子どもの日、母の日、ペンテコステとお祝いが続く月である。

5月3日は子どもの日。イエス様のように、神と人に愛され、事故病気から守られ、すくすくと成長するように、子どもたちのために祈る祝福式を覚える。子ども達には、柏餅が準備される予定である。

5月10日は母の日。子どもを愛し育てるお母さんたちのため、子ども達による特別演奏を呼びかけている。そしてお茶の時間は、男性陣によるアフタヌーン・ティーが準備される。お母さんたちを感謝する特別な日でありますようにと皆で神様に祈りつつ準備に臨みたい。

5月24日はペンテコステ礼拝。聖霊の神様が下り、力を受けた弟子たちは、福音を宣べ伝えた。そして、多くの人が救われ、イエス様に従うようになった。この素晴らしい教会の始まりをお祝いする。今も、主の霊が信じる者に豊かに注がれる。私たちも主の霊を受け、恵みと祝福を受けたいと思う。さあ、心を尽くして主に感謝する月を持とう！

On April 5th, we were so grateful to praise and worship our risen Lord Jesus in Nichigo Easter service with special music by the El Marino Japanese Chorus, violin music, and Kodomo handbell choir. The festivities continued with a potluck lunch and a children's Easter egg hunt.

May 3rd is "Kodomo-no-hi" Sunday. We will observe a special Service with Kodomo Blessing as we pray for our children to grow up in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men, just like Jesus. We especially pray for God's protection for all Kodomo from accidents and illness, and to grow up healthy and strong. We will not forget to enjoy Kashiwa-Mochi after Nichigo worship service together!

May 10th is Mother's Day. We are currently asking Kodomo to prepare special music to honor the mothers who love and nurture them. Also, during the fellowship time, the men are planning an English Afternoon Tea time. We are excited to thank our mothers together!

On May 24th, we will celebrate Pentecost Sunday. When the Holy Spirit came down, the disciples were empowered by God and proclaimed the Gospel boldly. Many believed and followed Jesus as a result. The Holy Spirit, who remains with us to this very day, continues to pour out His special power upon those who believe, including us!

We invite you to join us in Kodomo-no-hi, Mother's Day and Pentecost services.

Let us give thanks to the Lord for all the special days to celebrate!

- 平田

### Café Aloha Senior Bento Delivery on May 2nd (Saturday)

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

5月2日(土)弁当

教会では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。

: 筍ご飯、味噌汁、菓子、フルーツ

Menu: Takenoko-gohan, Miso-soup, Kashi, Fruits

## CAFE ALOHA 2026

WEST LA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SENIOR BENTO

JANUARY 10 - IN PERSON  
FEBRUARY 7 - DELIVERY  
MARCH 7 - IN PERSON  
APRIL 4 - DELIVERY  
MAY 2 - DELIVERY  
JUNE 6 - IN PERSON



# Antique Store & Yard, Plant, & Bake Sale

- Japanese antiques, dishes, bowls, tea & sake sets, baskets,
- Ikebana, kimono, obi, art, kawaii, Hello Kitty
- Never opened appliances & gifts
- Purses & Handbags
- Jewelry
- Vintage Barware
- Kitchen & housewares - cooking, baking, crystal, china
- Tech & electronics
- Home & Office
- Kids Toys, Books
- Games, Sports, Camping
- Garden, Hardware, Tools
- Unusual & strange curiosities
- And Live plants!

**Saturday, May 9<sup>th</sup> from 9AM - 2PM**

**West LA United Methodist Church**

**1913 Purdue Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 479-1379**

## Please start gathering items to donate:

**Please drop off Donations:** Sunday - Wednesday, May 3-6

- High value antiques & collectibles
  - Luxury Brands - Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Coach, Dooney & Bourke, Tori Burch, etc
  - Japanese household items - dishes, bowls, vases, serveware, lacquerware, decorative boxes
  - Kimono/obi & yukata, fabrics
  - Unopened gifts - wedding, anniversary, birthday, housewarming, omiyage
  - Barware - vintage cocktail & water glasses
  - Kitchen & housewares - appliances, cooking & baking, utensils, restaurant supplies
  - Jewelry - costume & fine jewelry
  - Precious metals - gold, silver, platinum in any form, eg old tooth fillings, coins
  - Purses & handbags - new & old, Designer & hand-made
  - Modern consumer Electronics - earbuds & headsets, bluetooth speakers, etc
  - Women's vintage & Designer clothing (NO shoes)
  - Dodgers, Lakers, Rams, Clippers, Chargers, Kings, Galaxy, LA Football Club, local sports team official branded clothing
  - Collectibles - trading cards, character & sports memorabilia
  - Anything kawaii-cute
  - Tools, hardware, garden
  - Home & office - storage containers, organizers, small electronics
  - Toys, games, sports equipment, camping, picnic
  - Books - Kids and Cookbooks only
  - Kids & Babies - toys, games, clothes
- All those knick-knacks & JUNQUE you just need to get rid of!

## IMPORTANT DATES to remember:

**Help Reconfigure Church:** Sun, May 3 after Nichigo Service

**Help Set UP - sort, price & display merchandise:**  
Mon-Fri, May 4-8

**Preview Sale for our Church Community:**  
Friday, May 8, 4-6pm

**Bake Sale Donations:**  
Friday, May 8 - Saturday (before 8:30 AM)

**Public Sale Day:**  
Saturday, May 9

## Please Join the Fun - Volunteer!

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

## Contribute to the Bake Sale!

We invite you to contribute your favorite home baked goods! Some ideas are cookies, bars, mochi, sweet breads, cakes, furikake chex mix, etc.

Please do not bring anything that requires refrigeration, advise if it contains nuts, and pre-package your items so they're ready for sale.

Please bring your items to the church kitchen on Friday and place it in the box labeled with your item's name or bring them Saturday morning to the Bake Sale table in the courtyard before 8:30am. Thank you!

## Your 2026 Antique Store Committee:

Elaine Sunoo, Jane Harada, Kay Yang, Sonia Dixon, and Steve Seto

**INVITE YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, AND COWORKERS!**

# HIKARI - FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

West Los Angeles  
United Methodist Church

NEW PILOT PROGRAM

## \*HIKARI\*

### SACRED Parenting in God's Garden with Love, Light & Laughter

Orientation in June  
Monthly Gatherings for Parents in July, August & September  
with a Hosted Meal & Childcare/Activities – Dates TBD

*Creating a Spiritually-Centered Parenting Community  
through Compassion, Contemplation, and Conversation  
with a grant from the Radically Inclusive Parenting Project*

In Japanese,  
HIKARI means light  
and symbolizes  
brightness, clarity & hope

Contact: Deaconess Jeri at [jotwlaumc@gmail.com](mailto:jotwlaumc@gmail.com)  
Church Office at [info@wlaumc.com](mailto:info@wlaumc.com)

## WLAUMC Awarded Spiritual Parenting Support Grant

West LA UMC has received a \$5,000 grant to launch Hikari: SACRED Parenting in God's Garden with Love, Light & Laughter, a new initiative to facilitate "parenting as a spiritual leadership path" that is rooted in contemplative practice, compassion, justice learning, and community healing. "Hikari," meaning light in Japanese, symbolizes clarity and hope. The grant period runs from May to November 2026.

To be eligible for the grant, Pastor Kiana and Deaconess Jeri completed the six week "Parenting for Spiritual & Social Transformation Certificate Program" through The Radically Inclusive Parenting Project, the grant's funder. We learned of this opportunity through the Center for Engaged Compassion at the Claremont School of Theology, where Jeri continues to study and serve.

A program orientation will be held in late May or June, with three monthly two hour gatherings in July, August, and September. Sessions will include spiritual practices, teaching, conversation, a hosted shared meal, and childcare/activities. Parents will receive the book SACRED Parenthood by Aizaiah Yong, Ph.D. and Rev. Nereyda Yong, which provides the SACRED Parenting framework.

Grounded in our church's credo, kodomo no tame ni (for the sake of the children), this project aims to lay the foundation for an ongoing and sustainable family ministry serving current and future generations.

Please join us in this new adventure! For more information and/or to be added to our Hikari Distribution List, please contact Deaconess Jeri at [jotwlaumc@gmail.com](mailto:jotwlaumc@gmail.com) or the Church Office at [info@wlaumc.com](mailto:info@wlaumc.com) or (310) 479 1379.

## CONGRATULATIONS, GRADUATES!

Do you know someone who is graduating this year? We'll celebrate our West LA UMC graduates on Sunday, June 14th. **Please let us know if you or someone you know is graduating this Spring** (this includes all graduates: elementary, middle school, high school, college, trade school, graduate school, etc.)!

CALLING ALL  
**GRADUATES!**

## CELEBRATING OUR GRADS 6/14!

## GOD'S GARDEN CELEBRATES EASTER SUNDAY!

Children were able to enjoy an egg hunt on Easter Sunday.

Youth not only stuffed over 200 eggs, they hid the eggs and assisted the children during their hunt!

The Youth and God's Garden are also looking for adult support during Sunday Worship Service time.

We are looking for volunteers who would:

- Support our littlest members (infants and toddlers) in the Nursery
- Teach a class or support the teachers
- Volunteer to guide our growing youth group
- Give a Children's Message



\*\*If you would like to support God's Garden ministries for children and youth, find Susanne for a chat, or email her at [susanne.nagata@gmail.com](mailto:susanne.nagata@gmail.com)

Designed by Kaylee Takai



Sawtelle Japantown Association Presents  
*Kodomo No Hi*  
**CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATION**



**1-4 PM**  
**Saturday**  
**May 2, 2026**

**Save the Date!**

- Free Games & Crafts
- Food Trucks\*
- Live Music
- Cultural Demonstrations
- Hula, Taiko & More!

WLA Buddhist Temple  
2003 Corinth Ave  
Los Angeles, CA 90025  
**FREE Parking at Lumen**

\*Food trucks will be open starting from 12PM

## REFRESHMENTS

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the refreshments. We hope your children enjoyed serving the congregation by being a part of fellowship time. Our next day to bring in goodies will be the first week of May. We will send out the sign up sheet, but feel free to add something even if you don't sign up. We had quite the spread last time!

**Upcoming refreshment dates: May 3, Sept 27, Nov 15**

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**CHILDREN'S DAY FESTIVAL AT THE BUDDHIST TEMPLE: 5/2**  
**KID'S CAMP: 6/28, 7/5(NO CAMP), 7/12, 7/19, 7/26, 8/2**  
**(SUNDAYS DURING WORSHIP SERVICE)**  
**ASIAN AMERICAN SUMMER CAMP: 6/28 - 7/3**  
**(FOR 6TH-12TH GRADES)**

## Why do I care about the Ballona Wetlands?

By: Steve Hirai

**Have you ever heard of the Ballona Wetlands?** No? Well, you are probably not the only one. It's kind of amazing that there is a precious and virtually unknown natural ecosystem that is right in our backyard. I'm referring to the Ballona Wetlands Ecological Reserve, which is a 577-acre protected area and is the largest remaining coastal wetlands in Los Angeles. It's located adjacent to the Pacific Ocean in Playa del Rey, just south of the marina in Marina del Rey and north of LAX. If you drive down Culver Boulevard to the ocean, you've passed right through the Ballona Wetlands without even realizing it.

It's important that we protect our wetlands because they provide so many benefits to our environment, animals, flora, fauna, and our emotional well-being. Here are some benefits provided by wetlands:

- A rest stop and fueling source for birds
- A nursery for young fish
- Vital and abundant base of the food chain
- A water filtration system, air purifier, and fresh air producer
- A flood buffer for local communities
- A source of pride and beauty, and a place for people to rejuvenate

The Friends of the Ballona Wetlands is a non-profit organization founded in 1978 whose mission is to champion the restoration and protection of Los Angeles' last coastal wetland and educating the

diverse community as stewards of nature. I have been a board member of the organization for many years.

**Why do I support this organization?** Well as a young kid, the Ballona Wetlands was a natural playground for the neighborhood kids. We played hide and seek; we hunted for lizards, snakes, and little fish; it was a safe place for kids to play in nature and be amongst the trees, plants, animals, and water. I want to protect and restore the wetlands for future generations, so that they have the same opportunity that I had to be in nature.

**West LA UMC is participating in a cleanup and restoration event at the Ballona Wetlands on May 23, 2026.** We would love for you to roll up your sleeves to help the Friends restore the last coastal wetland in Los Angeles. Get hands-on experience while learning about urban ecology. The time and effort you put in to clear out invasive vegetation gives our slow-growing native plants room to thrive. The event is recommended for ages 7 and up. Youths 16 and under should be accompanied by an adult.

Please reach out to Steve Hirai (stevehirai@yahoo.com) if you have any questions or are interested in participating. Please sign up using the QR code.



### MAY UPCOMING MONTHLY EVENTS:

- Breakfast Bunch at Marie Callender's (National and Sawtelle) on Thursday, 5/7
- Senior Fun Day (lunch provided) on Friday, 5/29

Please RSVP to Pastor Kiana or the Church office if you are planning to join Senior Fun Day!

### MAY Grief Support: **Mother's Day Gathering** **Sunday, May 17**

The Season of Mother's Day in May can be a difficult time for those who are grieving their mothers after a recent or long-ago loss. Join us after worship on Sunday, May 17, at 11:15 am for a post-Mother's Day gathering to share about those who mothered us and honor their memory (moms, grandmothers, aunties, sisters, friends . . .). Bring a photo and your memories. RSVP to Deaconess Jeri at jotwlaumc@gmail.com.

POST-MOTHER'S DAY  
GRIEF GATHERING



a time to remember  
those who mothered us  
and to honor their memory

# HABITAT FOR HUMANITY BUILD IN LONG BEACH



## Habitat for Humanity Build on Saturday, May 30th - Sign up Now!!

The Social and Environmental Justice Committee is sponsoring another build date with Habitat for Humanity in Long Beach on Saturday, May 30th, from 8am to 2pm. Come along and join the team in building new homes and using power tools (for a great cause).

West Los Angeles UMC  
**BUILD DAY**  
 Saturday, May 30<sup>th</sup> 8 am - 2 pm

Sign Up w/Mark Holmes  
[mholmes64@yahoo.com](mailto:mholmes64@yahoo.com)

Space is limited to twenty volunteers, so if you're interested, please sign up quickly by contacting Mark Holmes via email at [mholmes64@yahoo.com](mailto:mholmes64@yahoo.com), or text at 310-745-3698. Once you sign up, Mark will provide details on how to register with Habitat for the event, which is also required.

## UPCOMING PRIDE EVENTS



Sunday, May 31, 9:30 am  
 West LA UMC  
 Pride Worship Service

Saturday, June 6, 1-3 pm  
**"Okaeri Voices: Family & Faith"**  
 Screening & Discussion at Faith UMC  
 Co-Sponsored by  
 Okaeri and Faith, Centenary & West LA UMCs



Join us on Sunday, May 31st at 9:30 am for our annual Pride Worship Service and refreshments afterwards. On Saturday, June 6, 1:00 to 3:00 pm, Okaeri and our Reconciling Tri-Church team (Centenary, Faith & West LA) will be co-hosting a special screening of "Okaeri Voices," featuring the Murakami family discussing their journey. This gathering and discussion will be held at Faith UMC in Torrance. Carpooling available. RSVP to Jeri at [jotwlaumc@gmail.com](mailto:jotwlaumc@gmail.com).



### JOIN US FOR:

The premiere screening of Glenn & Karen Murakami's journey as parents of gay sons.

Panel discussion to follow to include the Murakami Family: Glenn, Karen, Derek, Kyle and Zach



**SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2026**  
 @ 1:00PM - 3:30PM

**Faith United Methodist Church**  
 2115 W 182nd St, Torrance, CA 90504

Please RSVP at:



**Thank you to the following who donated the Easter Lilies that adorned our sanctuary on Easter Sunday!**

<b>Bob Bailey</b> – I/M/O Carla Bailey	<b>Bill &amp; Loris Hirokawa</b> – I/M/O Takeaki Ushijima, I/M/O Mary Hirokawa	<b>Edwin Brewer &amp; Carole Morita</b> – Easter Joy	I/M/O Naoto & Shizuko Kodani, I/M/O Marsha Shimotsu Honjio
<b>Jennifer Abe &amp; Douglas Christie</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Gregg Omori &amp; Stacey Hirose</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Eleanor Nakano</b> – I/M/O Otto Nakano, I/M/O Douglas Nakano, Easter Joy	<b>Cooke &amp; Elaine Sunoo</b> – I/M/O Our Parents, I/M/O Our Grandparents
<b>Emily Cook</b> – I/M/O David Cook, I/M/O Milton & Chieko Inouye	<b>Kazie Kame</b> – I/M/O Rodger Kame, I/M/O Mrs. Miyoko Ahn, In Appreciation: Carole Nakano, Easter Joy	<b>Susan Nakashima</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Toshio &amp; Keiko Takahashi</b> – I/M/O Heikichi & Toshiko Takahashi, I/M/O Fusao & Naoe Otani, B-day Kanata A. Takahashi (5yrs) B-day Minako J. Takahashi (4yrs), Easter Joy
<b>Sonia &amp; Caryle Dixon</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Keiko L. Kano</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Joyce Patterson</b> – I/M/O Hap Patterson, I/M/O Parents	<b>Jeri Okamoto-Tanaka</b> – Easter Joy
<b>Sam &amp; Jean Dote</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Joli Kishi</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Grace Seto</b> – I/M/O Joseph Seto, I/M/O Fred & Ruby Nakano, Easter Joy	<b>David Tanoko</b> – Easter Joy
<b>Steve, Marilyn &amp; Mark Fujii</b> – I/M/O Robert Fujii, I/M/O Bob & Jeanne Kitagawa, Easter Joy	<b>Chris Kohler</b> – I/M/O Soichi & Ruth Fukui, I/M/O Cathy Tanaka, I/M/O Dyo Family, I/M/O David Cook	<b>Steven Seto</b> – I/M/O Joseph Seto, I/M/O Fred & Ruby Nakano, I/M/O Otto Nakano, I/M/O Douglas Nakano, I/M/O Walter Nakano & Carolyn Matsumura	<b>Lois Tateishi</b> – I/M/O Ron Fujii, Easter Joy
<b>Tony &amp; Shirley Fujisaki</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Bart &amp; Kirsten Maeda</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Greg, Jean &amp; David Shikata</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Diane Yamagata</b> – Easter Joy
<b>Sean Stouffer &amp; Danielle Gazda</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Ted Maesaki Family</b> – I/M/O Shinichi Maesaki, I/M/O Tsuruye Trudy Maesaki, Easter Joy	<b>Stanley &amp; Jane Shimotsu</b> – I/M/O Sho & Nancy Shimotsu,	<b>Kathy Yamashita</b> – Easter Joy
<b>Lenny &amp; Sharon Gill</b> – Easter Joy	<b>Janice &amp; Kenji Mayeda</b> – Easter Joy		<b>Anonymous</b> – Easter Joy
<b>Ken &amp; Jane Harada</b> – Easter Joy			
<b>Fred &amp; Sadie Hifumi</b> – I/M/O Fusako Hamamoto			

**A Special Thank-You to the Worship Commission and Kazie Kame for organizing the Easter Lilies! Happy Eastertide to all!**

**SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES**

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

**CHURCH OFFICE HOURS**

**Tuesday-Friday**  
 8:30am-12:30 pm  
 or call the Church Office at  
 310-479-1379  
 to speak to the staff

**STAFF**

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