



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

Non-Profit Organization  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
Los Angeles, CA  
Permit No. 27833

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

03/26

## 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 | MARCH Issue

---

**MARCH**  
**2026**

# SENIOR PASTOR'S REFLECTION AND HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

Grace and peace to you all, West LA UMC church family.

I hope this newsletter finds you in wholeness and health.

As I write today, I am about to embark on a spiritual retreat for the college and young adults students among our historic Japanese American UM churches. Myself, as well as our CST Intern Lynne Onishi, have been hard at work for months to plan this retreat and create sacred space for younger generations to encounter God's rest and grace. We will have representation from a variety of churches, including Faith UMC, West LA UMC, Aldersgate UMC, and United Japanese Christian Church. I look forward to coming back to share with our congregation about how God was moving amongst these faith-filled and inspiring students.

Our theme for this weekend is Rest & Renew. In an age of so much anxiety (whether that be personal, internal or external and political), finding and seeking rest is a crucial means of survival – not just for younger generations, but for all of us. We acknowledge as a faith community that the **true** soul-rest we desire cannot be filled by other "quick fix" solutions or pleasures. Instead, as Saint Augustine says:

**"Our souls are restless until they find rest in God."**

It is my prayer that as we continue into the season of Lent, we make space to actually rest and reflect on our lives. Do we have the peace we want and need? What might God be stirring within us, if we could only pause to listen? Perhaps the Lenten season, a season when we reflect on our own finitude and mortality, can

be an invitation to look deeper. We will continue our **Wednesday evening Lenten meetings, 7PM over Zoom**, so that we might do this reflection together. Even if you have not joined us yet, know that you are always welcome.

**As we look to the end of March, we invite you to join us for our HOLY WEEK SERVICES, which will transition us from Lent to the Easter Season.** If Lent is about reflection and reconciliation, Easter is about hope and joy!

**Our Palm Sunday service will be on Sunday, March 29th at 9:30AM (English) & 11AM (Nichigo).** This service marks the beginning of Holy Week, as we follow Jesus into Jerusalem. **Our Good Friday service will be on Friday, April 3rd at 7:30PM (Joint),** a solemn service of music and reflection as we remember the death of Christ. **Our Easter Sunday Service will be on Sunday, April 5th at 9:30AM (English) and 11AM (Nichigo),** when we will then celebrate one of our most holy days in the Christian calendar - the day of Jesus' resurrection hope. We hope to see you at any or all of these services as we remember the story of Christ's journey, together.

Lastly, I would like to say please do let me know if there are any ways that I or our WLA Staff and community can be praying for you. My greatest joy thus far in this role has been visiting with church members, getting to know you more, and hearing how we can all be praying together in this time.

Holding you all in prayer and peace,  
Rev. Kiana Nicholson (she/her)

.....  
**HOLY WEEK HELP NEEDED:**

**FLOWERS FOR EASTER SUNDAY'S FLOWERING OF THE CROSS**

In many churches such as ours, the tradition of making a floral cross with the generous donations of flowers from the congregation is very much needed and appreciated. This year we hope to have enough to fill the wire cross abundantly so that it might be displayed in the sanctuary during worship. Please bring your flowers early to church on Easter morning before worship where folks will help fill the wire cross. Be sure to leave at least 6 inches of stem or more so that the flowers will stay fixed in the wire cross without falling out.

**ORDER EASTER LILIES FOR ALTAR AREA BEFORE EASTER (March 29)**

Like our poinsettias that adorn our sanctuary at Advent and Christmas, so we hope to adorn the sanctuary altar in the same way except with beautiful Easter Lilies on Easter morning! Easter lily order forms will be available starting March 8th with the deadline of March 29th. The lilies will adorn our sanctuary on Easter Sunday and may be taken home after the service. Please see the order form in this newsletter.



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

「お別れ」

2月15日と22日は、日語部ではお別れ会が続いた。青山ファミリーと近藤ファミリーが日本に帰国したからである。子ども達と一緒に家族でUCLAに留学している間に教会に導かれ、参加するようになった。元気のよい子ども達の声や、ピアノやハンドベルで礼拝賛美を盛り上げてくれた良い思い出ばかりである。移民社会生活の色々なストレスを受けた時、教会が主の愛で覆うところを何度も見ることができた。短い期間ではあるが、WLA教会でイエス様の愛を学んでくれたのが一番嬉しいと思う。

3月3日は賛美の日。賛美の詩を皆と分かち合いたい。「人の出会いは主の導き。一緒に集うことも主の導き。私たちは主の栄光のため創られた者。主の栄光のため仕える者である。主の召命を覚え、続けて導き給え。」私の祈りがここにある。

On February 15th and 22nd, Nichigo held a series of farewell parties. The Aoyama family and the Kondo family returned to Japan. They were invited to our church and began attending while the fathers were working at UCLA as researchers. We have many good memories of their children's joyful voices and their contributions to Nichigo worship through piano and Kodomo handbell music. We witnessed how our church provided comfort and support with God's love during difficult times in America as foreigners. Although it was a short period, I am very thankful that they learned about Jesus' love at our church.

March 3rd is a day of praise and worship in Japan. I want to share one praise song with everyone: "Our encounters are guided by the Lord. Gathering together to worship is also guided by the Lord. We are created for God's glory. We are called to serve for God's glory. Remembering His calling, may the Lord continue to guide us." This is my prayer.

- 平田

### Café Aloha Senior Luncheon on March 7th (Saturday)

To celebrate Girl's Day, Café Aloha ministry would like to invite seniors 70 and older to an in-person luncheon. We will meet in the Church Fellowship Hall on Saturday, March 7 at 11:00 AM for a seasonal Japanese meal, light exercise, fellowship, music, and a spiritual message. Those unable to attend in person will receive a meal delivered to their home. If you are interested, please sign-up or contact the Church office.

3月7日(土) 11時CafeAlohaシニアミニストリー&弁当

教会では桃の節句を感謝し、70才以上のシニア向けに、ランチ、賛美、体操、聖書のお話しの集りをします。参加できない方には、お弁当を届けます。ご希望の方はサインアップ、又は教会オフィスまでご連絡ください。

メニュー：寿司、スープ、菓子、フルーツ  
Menu: Sushi, 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



## CAFE ALOHA 2026

WEST LA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
SENIOR BENTO

JULY 11 - DELIVERY  
AUGUST 1 - DELIVERY  
SEPTEMBER 5 - IN PERSON  
OCTOBER 3 - DELIVERY  
NOVEMBER 7 - DELIVERY  
DECEMBER 5 - DELIVERY



## WEST LA UMC EDUCATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS

Our church offers scholarships for graduating high school students and for students pursuing ordained ministry.

For high school Seniors at our church who plan to further their education, our church is proud to offer two scholarship opportunities. We have the Shikata Scholarship and the Sawahata Scholarship. The deadline to complete the application is April 1st. If you would like to apply, please contact Mike Dote at [mkdote@yahoo.com](mailto:mkdote@yahoo.com). Please note, we require two letters of recommendation, so don't delay!

For students of Japanese ancestry studying at a Seminary in the US, we have the Sasaki Murakami Ethnic Ministerial Scholarship. The deadline is also April 1st. Please use the same contact info to receive the application. Thank you!

**If you would like to apply to any of the scholarships, please contact Mike Dote at [mkdote@yahoo.com](mailto:mkdote@yahoo.com).**

## FUN AT THE MIDPOINTERS' ART PARTY!



The Midpointers Ministry gathered for an evening of artistic expression and creativity, painting along with a Bob Ross video and enjoying fellowship through art! If you're interested in joining the Midpointers (20s-40s) Fellowship, please contact Pastor Kiana or the Church Office for more information.



## MARCH UPCOMING EVENTS

5

### Breakfast Bunch

Thursday, March 5 | 8AM  
at Marie Callender's on National Blvd

19

### Grief Support Group

Thursday, March 19 | 11:30AM

27

### Senior Fun Day

Friday, March 27 | 10AM

## Thursday Breakfast Bunch: Thursday, March 5th at 8AM

Anyone in our church is welcome to join us for breakfast on the first Thursday of every month! You don't have to be a senior; just an early riser hungry for breakfast and fellowship! The **Marie Callender's restaurant** is located at **11324 National Blvd, Los Angeles, CA** near the corner of Sawtelle and National Boulevard.

## Grief Support Group: Thursday, March 19th at 11:30AM

Join us on Thursday, March 19th for our monthly Grief Support Group gathering and lunch. Please RSVP to Pastor Kiana or the Church Office if you're planning to join.

## Senior Fun Day: Friday, March 27th at 10AM

Our Senior Fun Day gatherings are so much fun! We play board games, enjoy lunch together, play some inventive team challenges, and have really meaningful times sharing about our lives. Please come! We meet in the Nisei Fellowship Hall at church. Please RSVP to Pastor Kiana or the Church Office if you plan to come.

## 2026 SOUPER BOWL FUNDRAISER

### Social & Environmental Justice and Missions Team ANNUAL SOUPER BOWL SUNDAY FUNDRAISER

Soups on! Thank you to all of the fabulous soup chefs, cookie bakers, diners, and donors who made our annual Souper Bowl fundraiser such a delicious success.



Featured soups included Pozole (Carolina Izumi), Leek & Potato (Disa Lindgren), Chasen's Turkey Chili (Sharon Kinoshita-Gill), Black Bean (Joyce Patterson), Chicken Tortilla (Mui Koike), Chinese Jook (Susie Koo), Beef Barley (Gregg Omori), Butternut Squash (Jennifer Akamine Phillips), Clam Chowder (Janice Mayeda), and Zucchini (Jane Shimotsu). Thank you to Susan Tsukahira, Sadie Hifumi, Keiko Kikuta, Keiko Kuyama, Keiko Takahashi, and Pam Ryder for providing rolls, onigiri, and cookies!

Thanks to the generosity of our English & Nichigo congregations, we will be donating approximately \$1,000 to support the ministries of North Hills United Methodist Hispanic Ministries, our UMC neighbor that recently experienced armed and masked ICE agents entering church grounds to arrest a congregation member during their feeding ministry and mother & child program. Our prayers continue for our sister church family during this vulnerable time.

ORDER EASTER LILIES BY SUNDAY, MARCH 29!

# Easter Lily Order Form



If you wish to order lilies for the Easter Worship Service on Sunday, April 5, 2026 please complete the form below and place it with your payment in the envelope on the bulletin board in the Nisei Fellowship Hall.

Each plant is \$12, and orders are due by **Sunday, March 29**. Proceeds will benefit the Worship Commission. After the Easter Worship Service, please take your plant(s) or arrange for someone to take them home.

Thank you in advance for beautifying the Sanctuary on Easter Sunday with your Easter Lilies.

*Kazie Kame*

**Easter Lily Chairperson**



## 2026 Easter Lily Order Form

*Please attach this completed form to your check made out to WLAUMC with Easter Lily Order on the memo line.*



**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Number of Plants:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please check any of the following:

- For Easter Joy
- For a Birthday Celebration \_\_\_\_\_
- For an Anniversary Celebration \_\_\_\_\_
- Memorial \_\_\_\_\_

Don't forget to order Easter Lilies to adorn our altar on Easter morning! Please complete the attached order form and return it to church by **Sunday, March 29, 2026**.

### COFFEE FELLOWSHIP SIGN-UPS AVAILABLE!

Visit the purple welcome table to sign up for a date to bring refreshments for our coffee fellowship hour!

### JOIN ONLINE LENTEN STUDY: Wednesdays in Lent, 7PM on Zoom

We'll host a Lenten study every Wednesday throughout the season of Lent. Join for reflection, discussion and prayer! Sign up with Pastor Kiana or the Church Office!

## CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY VISITS CHURCH



### West LA UMC Welcomes Claremont School of Theology Students & Faculty

What better way to learn about the World II Japanese American experience of forced removal and incarceration than visiting with seniors who lived through this era (and their descendants) in a church founded by Japanese immigrants? CST students and community members joined in our Senior Fun Day on January 23rd for conversation, a Hawaiian/Japanese lunch, fun & games, and discussion of the church's history, faith in action, and architectural features – from our humble founding in 1930, through the evacuation, return, and eventual restoration as a vibrant, social justice-oriented congregation.

The field trip to West LA UMC was part of an innovative constructive theology course designed by Rev. Dr. Yuki Schwartz entitled "Theology as Testimony: Space, Practices, and Legacies of Japanese American Detention in Los Angeles." Deaconess Jeri Okamoto-Tanaka, Rev. Yosuke Yoshikawa, and Lynne Onishi are enrolled in the class, which includes lectures, film screenings, and visits to Centenary UMC & Little Tokyo, Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights, and the West LA Buddhist Temple and Sawtelle neighborhood.

We look forward to continuing our collaboration with CST! Thank you to all who welcomed the students and faculty with such hospitality!



In addition to exploring Sawtelle Japantown, the class visited the Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights (left) and the Little Tokyo neighborhood (center). Artwork by Eddy Kurushima was on display at Centenary UMC (right).



## 2026 All Church Antique Store, Yard, Bake & Plant Sale

**Saturday, May 9 (the day before Mother's Day)**

Thanks to your donations, enthusiastic work and inviting friends, our annual Sale has become a "Must Attend" event. Last year, over 160 of you volunteered your skills, connected with friends, and hosted hundreds of shoppers from outside our church community. You raised a record amount of funds. Plus, we were able to donate all our leftover merchandise to two worthy community organizations!

**Donations: Sunday - Wednesday, May 3-6**  
**Preview Sale for our Church Community: Friday, May 8 4-6pm**  
**Public Sale Day: Saturday, May 9**

Please Join the Fun!  
 Contact Kay Yang @ [knyang1016@gmail.com](mailto:knyang1016@gmail.com), or call the church at (310) 473-1379 to learn how you can volunteer.

### Please start gathering items to donate:

- 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
- Curiosities - Surprise us! We love STRANGE

### Your 2026 Yard Sale Committee:

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

Dear West LA UMC members & friends,

Greetings in Christ and a belated new year's greetings! Our sincere apologies for the delay in sending this note of thanks to all of you! As some of you may have known, the end of 2025 was an extremely hectic time for us (Viki, Kirk and I). Apartment hunting throughout November; finishing up our time and work at church; sorting through our belongings for purging, packing, moving; and doing our best to clear out and clean up the parsonage kept us busy throughout December and January.



Vacating the parsonage as expediently as possible to assist the Board of Trustees in readying the parsonage for Pastor Kiana and Dr. Phifer Nicholson was our highest priority which we finally completed around the middle of January. Because of this focus, opening gifts received for Christmas and in celebration of our retirement was held off until we finally had some breathing space to open cards and gifts in the middle of January after we vacated the parsonage completely.

Once we began opening cards and gifts, our emotions were set ablaze as Viki and I felt so touched by the tremendous and overwhelming love, congratulations, and well-wishes of all of you at West LA UMC and friends from far and wide. Words alone cannot express the love we felt from you and for you. We shall forever be grateful to all of you at West LA UMC and to God for the relationships of friendship and love that we have shared through these past 3&1/2 years. Our entire journey of ministry through 40 & 1/2 years has been the most amazing blessing. We are so thankful that our last appointment was a journey shared with all of you at West LA UMC.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to share one last Christmas with you! Thank you for the wonderful Retirement worship & program planned and attended by so many of you which was held on Sunday, December 21st. We especially know that taking the time to celebrate our retirement was no easy planning task amidst the joy and busy-ness of Advent and Christmas both regarding your personal schedules and the heightened normal seasonal church programming and worships.

We thank you for every material and monetary gift and every card and note from you that expressed such kind and generous words of support, congratulations and thanks! Viki and I were so deeply touched emotionally by every measure of love you shared with us.

To update you: We are now renting a two bedroom apartment near Los Angeles Airport and still trying to sort our belongings and putting things in place and still sorting and purging. We think this will occupy most of the year. We are now most fully immersed in providing child care for our 22-month-old granddaughter from Monday through Friday. Our granddaughter is the most precious joy to be with daily, though we do admit we go home tired every day!

Unfortunately we missed the January 10th newsletter deadline to submit this note of thanks to you collectively as our church family, so we are very sorry that we did not convey our thanks to you earlier. We continue to hope and pray the best for you in ministry as you continue to press forward. We know you have a wonderful ministry staff and lay leadership to keep you moving forward in productive and life-redeeming ministry! We look forward to the days when we will be able to visit and see you again. Until then, may you always know there is special place in our hearts for all of you and the ministry of West Los Angeles United Methodist Church!

Blessings to you always,  
Rev. Keith & Viki Inouye

**THANK YOU, WEST LA UMC!**

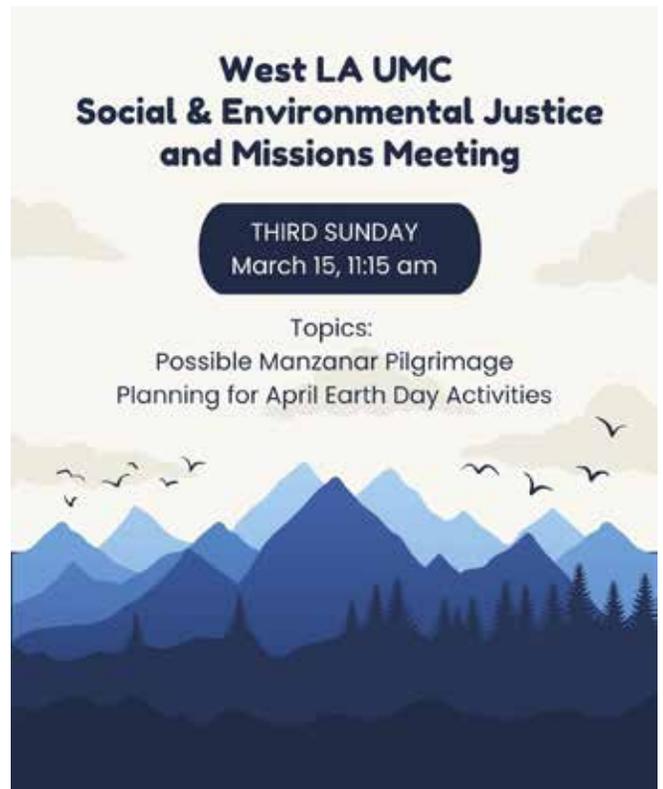
# What is Greenwashing?

As consumers become more and more interested in making environmentally friendly decisions, existing companies have to find ways to avoid losing customers. In many cases, instead of changing their practices, their solution is greenwashing. “Greenwashing” is when a company uses public messaging to appear more environmentally friendly than they actually are. It is easier and much cheaper to add a sustainability page to a website, than it is to become sustainable.

This has been going on for a long time. Companies have started using buzz words with no concrete meaning or certification, including “natural,” “eco-friendly,” “sustainable,” and “nontoxic.” Packaging and logos may include colors and imagery that alludes to nature, such as greens and browns, or pastures and trees, to trick us into thinking that the earth is part of their values. So the big problem is, how can we as consumers know what is greenwashing and what is genuine?

It’s not easy. Things to look out for are vagueness, claims and empty statements with no proof, and those buzz words listed above. Pay attention to certifications to make sure they are real and accredited. Take note of how transparent the company is (its willingness to publicly post third-party data and behind-the-scenes access). Seek out smaller companies with a cause as their main mission, rather than large companies with the one environmental page that could be an afterthought. And trust your gut. I’ve found the more I do research on different companies, it’s getting a little easier to tell if they’re being genuine, or just trying to make sales.

-Jamie Thierman



## SUNDAY WORSHIP SERVICES

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

**Rev. Kiana Nicholson**  
 Senior Pastor  
[kiana.h.nicholson1@gmail.com](mailto:kiana.h.nicholson1@gmail.com)

**Rev. Rebecca Hirata**  
 Japanese Language Pastor  
[Nichigo@wlaumc.com](mailto:Nichigo@wlaumc.com)

**Deaconess Jeri Okamoto-Tanaka**  
 Director of Spiritual Engagement &  
 Compassion Care  
[jotwlaumc@gmail.com](mailto:jotwlaumc@gmail.com)

**Lynne Onishi**  
 Administrative Assistant  
[info@wlaumc.com](mailto:info@wlaumc.com)  
 310-479-1379