



# United Japanese Christian Church



136 N. Villa Avenue, Clovis, CA 93612  
559-322-0701

## The Focal Point February 2023



Pastors	Rev. Akiko Miyake-Stoner Pastor Ivana Heang
Church Secretary	Stephanie Sumi
Clerical Specialist	Kathie Sakamoto
Financial Recorder	Yukiko Hijjoka
Media Specialist	Nathan Nakamura

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### Office Hours

Mon-Thu 9:00 AM—3:00 PM

CLOSED ON FRIDAY

REV. AKIKO'S DAY OFF—TUESDAY

PASTOR IVANA IS ON MATERNITY LEAVE

NATHAN NAKAMURA'S DAY OFF—MONDAY

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Email: [info@ujclife.com](mailto:info@ujclife.com)

Website: [www.ujclife.com](http://www.ujclife.com)

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### Worship Schedule

In-person Worship: 10:30 am

Online Worship at [www.ujclife.com](http://www.ujclife.com)

## **Pastor's Page**

Dear UJCC and Friends,

The wilderness is a place and an idea that shows up a lot in the Bible. A few weeks ago, the sermon focused on Elijah who heard God in the “sound of sheer silence” in the wilderness. The ancient Israelites wandered in the wilderness after they escaped bondage in Egypt. Jesus is tempted by the devil in the wilderness. Jesus turns five loaves and two fish into meals for thousands of people in the wilderness. The wilderness is a place of stark isolation at times; we experience not just physical wilderness, but spiritual and emotional wilderness times in our lives as well. The wilderness can also be a pregnant place, a place of possibility. As a metaphor, the idea of wilderness is very rich.

So, UJCC member Gary Chong and I have been hatching an idea for Lent (which begins at the end of this month, on Ash Wednesday, February 22) around this theme of wilderness and how we see it expressed in visual art and through the life journeys of visual artists. It all began when Gary, very knowledgeable about art and an artist himself, was approached by someone saying that he should offer an art class at UJCC. I thought it might pair well with Lent, so it's blossomed to include a sermon series as well! We're calling it “Art For Healing: Voices in The Wilderness.” We'll kick it off on Sunday, February 26 and follow this theme through Easter (April 9).

About halfway through Lent, on Sunday, March 19, Gary will offer an art class. Please find details and more information on how to participate later in the newsletter.

Through this series, it is our hope that together we will find meaning and spiritual grounding in the healing power of art. We'll introduce you to some artists you may never have heard of as well as some impactful and ongoing movements within the art world. I'm interested in exploring the power of art, not just as something we engage with our eyes, but as a spiritual tool to learn more about God, ourselves, our lives, and the implications these themes have on both the artist and the wider community. Please join us for “Art For Healing: Voices in The Wilderness” series!

Also, this year, we will again be collaborating with our circuit churches (sister United Methodist congregations in our area) for the special services during Lent. Please mark your calendars for Ash Wednesday Service (Wednesday, February 22 @ 7pm @ Wesley UMC), Maundy Thursday Service (Thursday, April 6 @ 7pm @ Memorial UMC), Good Friday Service (Friday, April 7 @ 7pm @ Grace UMC), and Easter Sunrise Service (Sunday, April 9 @ 6:30am @ Memorial UMC). Our UJCC Easter celebration will be at UJCC as usual.

On another note, a very belated thank you for the abundant Christmas bonus! I am continually overwhelmed by the generosity of this church community and find myself humbled by your expressions of love and support. Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Blessings to you!

Akiko

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## Joys and Concerns

In this month when we celebrate love, let's recall the beautiful words of the apostle Paul. Here he talks about the quality of love that flourishes in community (from I Corinthians 13:4-7):

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

May love be at the center of all we do and may our love flow to those we pray for, including...

June Kishi  
Paras Family  
Aaron Smith

We pray for concerns in our church community...

- Floreida Uriarte, Emery Sagrado's interim Pharmacist Director, who had a seizure in January in her office and later discovered she has a 5cm slow growing left temporal tumor. We pray for her, her family, and health care team;
- Pastor Ivana Heang following the birth of Lhilo: we pray for her mental health, being mostly home bound due to doctor's orders;
- Rev. Vathanak and Pastor Ivana's new baby, Lhilo, that she is able to gain back the whole pound she lost while they were in hospital. Gratitude for the guidance of the lactation nurses;
- Bryce Swezey, Mike and Carol's son, who works as a correctional officer, and anticipates being laid off due to downsizing; we pray for him and his colleagues in this difficult time of transition;
- Those who are ill and are recovering in our church community;

For those who grieve...

- The loved ones of Joe, friend of Carol Contreras and the husband of Michele, who passed away January 10, after many health struggles;
- The family and friends of Lisa, Brian Booth's wife, who was killed in January (Brian is a friend of Mike Yamamoto);
- The loved ones of Rose Tamiyasu who passed away suddenly January 3. We hold in prayer her husband George; her children Liane and Bruce; nieces Stephanie Sumi, Jo Ann Dack, Debbie & Staci Lucio; and their family;
- Jessica and her family as they go through a difficult time; we've had the chance to get to know Jessica and her family over the past year through HCI (Healthy Church Initiative);
- The family and friends of Tom Ramage, who passed away December 26. We pray for especially for his wife Sandi, daughter Tami, daughter-in-law Margaret, and grandchildren Gracie and Charlie;
- Daniel and his family on the passing of his dad December 24; Daniel is Gary Chong's friend;

For our wider community and world...

- refugees around the world making homes in foreign places;
- for continued safety and protection against COVID-19;
- for our veterans and service personnel;
- for increased understanding and empathy among people with different perspectives;
- for all who experience trauma and fear due to war;
- for those who struggle with mental illness and for those who care for them;

For God's goodness in our community...

- Thanksgiving for all the support Pastor Ivana and family are receiving after Lhilo's birth on December 30 (We welcome Lhilo Maxima Heang, born at 8:50am; 9.9 lbs, 21 inches): help at home her parents, prayers and thoughts from UJCC, Dr. John Damrose Sr. who helped with Lhilo's tongue tie, and Nathan Nakamura and technology who makes it possible for those at home to be part of Sunday worship;
- Joy that Hisaye Naito and daughter Sally Leeds are able to join the UJCC livestream worship from Vintage Gardens;
- Thanksgiving for the opportunity to explore prayer during the January sermon series;

- Gratitude for Fay Nakaguchi who organized the UJCC contingent at the Martin Luther King breakfast this year; thanks to God for all who attended and prayers that our world might be committed to fulfilling his vision for nonviolence and racial reconciliation;
- Gratitude for a praying church and Akiko asks for prayers for wisdom, for energy, for clarity of mind in ministry; please also pray for my family's health and unity;
- Joy for Keila Takeuchi and Michael Tolladay who were married January 7; Keila is the daughter of Russ and Vivian, the niece of Paul and Carol Yamashita and Elaine Renge;
- Praises for the arrival of Parker Chiu Somberg, Yo and Jo Katayama's first great grandchild! Born December 12 to Andrew and Nikki Somberg in San Francisco;
- Joy for the 1st birthday of Delilah, Sally Leeds' granddaughter;
- Blessings for the Kuzma-Sakamoto family: John, Kristine, Daphne, and JJ moved to GA for the next 6 months for John's work. Prayers for smooth transitions, that they find a good church home there, that they thrive in their work and school, and travel back to us safely this summer.

If we have made any errors, we apologize and would appreciate any corrections! If you have changes or additions to our prayer list, please let Akiko know ([akiko@ujcclife.com](mailto:akiko@ujcclife.com) or 559-322-0701).

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## Finance

There was a good deal of volatility in 2022 but our church finances ended the year on a high note.

December income of \$93,937 exceeded expenses by over \$61,400. For the full year, we had revenues of \$452,868 and expenses of \$385,765. This favorable situation was due to your generous support through pledges, special donations and the support for our major fund raisers, the Luau and Asian Craft Faire. Bequests by former members also played a big role.

On the other hand, our investments were another story. Like most investors, our portfolio suffered significant losses (about 14.5%). Because our investment losses were at least partially offset by our strong revenues, our overall financial picture remains quite good. We started the year with total reserves of \$993,835 and ended with \$925,576.

Going forward, let's hope for a less stressful year. Happy New Year and thank you again.

Report prepared by Ken Kurokawa

## A Note from the Moderator

Hard to believe that we are already in the second month of the year 2023!!!

On February 5<sup>th</sup>, we will be holding our first Board of Director's meeting for the new year.

Many of the 2022 BOD members will be returning as they continue to hold leadership positions on their respective committees, however, we do have new members to add to the UJCC list of lay leaders.

Please welcome to BOD 2023 the following members:

Ernie Kazato - Chair of Property Committee - and also  
UCC Denominational Rep

Diane Staebler - continues as part of BOD, but in a different role  
Chair of Finance Committee

Leslie Shirakawa - UCC Denominational Rep

Kinuyo Bundon and Kumiko Jones - Co Coordinators of Nichigo-Bu- Ministry Program

Craig Hasegawa - Chair of Friend's Care - Ministry Program

Ken Kurakawa - continues on BOD in a different role this year... as chair of the Ministry Program - Neighbors.

We are fortunate at UJCC to have resources and knowledge through our leaders. They lead us with their strengths, honesty, and commitment to serve the needs of UJCC.

I am very grateful for each of them.

**Info, updates and more:**

A. **HCI (Healthy Church Initiative):** The HCI committee continues to move forth with our commitment to connect with young families! We welcome all to join us in this commitment and mission. If you have any thoughts or ideas of events... we would love to hear from you!

**Financial Peace University for adults:** Carol Swezey will be leading a FPU from February 7-April 22, 6-8pm. Simultaneously there will be a children's program and childcare if needed. Look for more information in this newsletter.

B. **Tomodachi** –Don't forget to look at the Tomodachi flyer to reserve your meal for February 8<sup>th</sup>We'll be celebrating Valentine's Day!

C. **Upcoming:**

February 7 thru April 11-Financial Peace University for adults  
February 8 – Tomodachi Drive Thru

Take care and Stay Safe everyone!!! **Arlene Eberly**

## Community Care Team

The Community Care Team invited congregation members to the Annual Community Breakfast honoring Rev. Dr. Martine Luther King, Jr. on January 14. The keynote speaker was Dr Sudarshan Kapoor and it was sponsored by the Clovis Police Dept and the Unity Committee. It was held at the California Health Sciences University in Clovis. Fay Nakaguchi reserved 2 tables for UJCC.



## Tomodachi Seniors Group and Friends

*"Let all that you do be done in love."*  
1 Corinthians 16:14

### A Note of Thanks

Thank you for your donations to the Central California Food Bank given at our Joy of Christmas event. Your donations in the amount of \$264.00 will provide 1,056 meals for our neighbors in need in the surrounding five counties.

### Happy Valentine's Day Drive-Thru Box Lunch

**Wednesday, February 8th at 11:30 AM at the UJCC**

We hope that you'll be able to join us. Our Valentine's box lunch will be catered by **The Berrock Shop**. Since 1977, the Berrock Shop has been making delicious, made from scratch berrocks by hand each day. Lunch will consist of a ground beef berrock, two homemade deli sides (broccoli salad and potato salad), and a fresh baked cookie. We'll include other Valentine treats as well. The lunch is at no cost to you through the generosity of donors to the Tomodachi ministry.

We HEARTILY look forward to seeing you at our (pre) Valentine's Day event! **Please RSVP by the deadline of February 1st** by calling the Church office (322-0701) or Janelle Saito (313-0489) -- please leave a message with your order.

### **\*Save the Date\***

### Easter Celebration

**Wednesday, April 5th**

More information regarding our Easter event will be included in next month's newsletter.

### Senior Care Response Team (SCRT) Ministry

\*The ministry offers assistance and support to our seniors via Church and community resources upon request and within our scope.

\*The SCRT continues to purchase/deliver groceries and supplies upon request.

\*The ministry coordinates the distribution of DVD copies of Sunday worship--with the support of Nathan Nakamura, Church Media Specialist, and Church staff.

\*Apple iPad Outreach: the ministry owns 3 iPads (purchased with UMC Beulah Grant award funds) which can be borrowed on a first come-first served basis and utilized to access UJCC's website, online worship, Church meetings via Zoom, and to stay connected with family and friends. The ministry covers the monthly data fee for each loaned iPad.

If you would like to be included in any of the above outreach, please contact Arlene Eberly (960-4044) or Janelle Saito (313-0489).

Thank you for your ongoing prayers and support of the Senior Care Response Team. If you would like to volunteer to assist with this ministry, please contact Arlene or Janelle.

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## **Lent Art Class**

Sunday, March 19 @ 12-4pm; UJCC Fellowship Classroom

In conjunction with “Art For Healing: Voices In The Wilderness,” the sermon series during Lent, Gary Chong will host an art class exploring the wilderness times Jesus experienced as well as the wilderness times we’ve experienced in our lives.

If participants feel comfortable, there will be an option to display the art created in this class on Easter morning.

Tools and supplies will be provided. No experience necessary. People of all ages (adults and children) welcome. Please note this is not a class focused on technique or method, but a class to explore our experiences and emotions.

As this is a class immediately following worship, please bring your own sack lunch to eat at the beginning of the class. Scan the QR code to register or visit <https://tinyurl.com/wxv4az73> to sign up. If you have any questions, please contact Gary Chong (Home: 559-293-3382 or Cell: 559-840-6903) or the church office (559-322-0701).



# Girl Scout Troop 305

By Kathie Sakamoto

It's Girl Scout cookie time. If you would like to purchase cookies, please contact Kathie Sakamoto at [kathie@ujcclife.com](mailto:kathie@ujcclife.com) or (559)352-3750. There is a new cookie called Raspberry Rally. This is available online only. We will not have this in stock. In advance Troop 305 would like to Thank you for your continuous support.

## Your Girl Scout Cookie favorites are back!



**Adventurefuls<sup>®</sup>**

*Indulgent brownie-inspired cookies with caramel flavored crème and a hint of sea salt*



**Toast-Yay!<sup>™</sup>**

*French Toast-inspired cookies dipped in delicious icing*



**Lemonades<sup>®</sup>**

*Savory slices of shortbread with a refreshingly tangy lemon flavored icing*



**Trefoils<sup>®</sup>**

*Iconic shortbread cookies inspired by the original Girl Scout recipe*



**Thin Mints<sup>®</sup>**

*Crispy chocolate wafers dipped in a mint chocolaty coating*



**Peanut Butter Patties<sup>®</sup>**

*Crispy cookies layered with peanut butter and covered with a chocolate coating*



**Caramel deLites<sup>®</sup>**

*Crispy cookies topped with caramel, toasted coconut, and chocolaty stripes*



**Peanut Butter Sandwich<sup>®</sup>**

*Crisp and crunchy oatmeal cookies with creamy peanut butter filling*



**Caramel Chocolate Chip<sup>®</sup>**

*Caramel, semi-sweet chocolate chips, and a hint of sea salt in a delicious cookie\**  
\*Limited availability



**Raspberry Rally<sup>®</sup>**

*Thin, crispy cookies infused with raspberry flavor, dipped in chocolaty coating\**  
\*Online sales only, while supplies last!

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## Cub Scouts Pack 199



by Julien Ros – Cubmaster

On Saturday, Dec 17<sup>th</sup>, from 1pm to 3pm, cub scouts rang bells and collected donations for the Salvation Army.

*During our Jan 8<sup>th</sup> meeting, we continued promoting character development, citizenship training, personal fitness, and leadership through our den activities.*

On Sunday, Feb 12, we are having a tri tip fundraiser event. You can enjoy a fully cooked meal during Superbowl. Please consider supporting one of our biggest fundraisers of the year. You can purchase a ticket by contacting me at the number in the flyer, by Feb 5th.



Troop & Pack 199 Super Bowl Tri -Tip Dinner  
(Limited Tickets)

February 12, 2023

Pick up time 11:00 am - 1:00 pm

United Japanese Christian Church  
136 North Villa Ave. Clovis, CA 93612



Meal Includes (Feeds a Family of 4):



- One Whole BBQ Tri-Tip
- Seasoned Green Beans
- Homemade Rice Pilaf
- Scout Made Dessert



Prepared. For Life.®

Call: 559-977-8161

Until next time, remember your **Duty to God, Duty to Others, and Duty to Self!**

## Central California Nikkei Foundation



### Shredding Community Service and Fundraiser

Saturday, April 29, 2023

9am to 12 noon

Securely dispose of personal documents, tax papers,  
Books-hardback & paperback.

Limit: 20 Banker Sized Boxes per car

Cost: \$15 per Banker Sized Box

Cash or Check only

Please make check payable to CCNF

Event will be Drive-Thru

Boxes will be emptied from your trunk/tailgate and returned

Held at Vintage Gardens

540 S. Peach Ave., Fresno

Questions contact: Susan Hayashi – 325-1457 or text 906-8540

Seniors who cannot drive to the event, call Susan by **April 15**

and arrange for pick-up.

# Takumi Kato

加藤 拓三

## Taiko Drumming and Dragon Dance

Saturday  
February 4th  
1:00PM

136 N. Villa Ave  
Clovis CA 93612

United Japanese Christian Church

Takumi is the World  
class Taiko  
performer who  
Champion in the O-Daiko  
section of the Tokyo  
International Wadaiko  
Contest in 2018

No admission fee  
Donations are appreciated  
※Please support their Journey  
by donating.



**UNITED JAPANESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH****ACKNOWLEDGMENTS****12/26/22 thru 1/22/23**

Iris Hiraga: In Memory of Catherine Hiraga  
M/M Alan Hirasuna: In Memories of Setsu & Fred Hirasuna  
Joyce Imai: In Memory of Mel Imai  
M/M Yo Katayama: In Memory of Mary Jane Kusakai  
M/M Yo Katayama: In Memory of Rose Tamiyasu  
D/M Ken Kurokawa: In Memory of Rose Tamiyasu  
M/M Terry Leeds: In Memory of Jeff Naito  
Hanako Lord: In Memory of Ellen Yamada  
Stan Morita: In Memory of Donald Mikami  
Stan Morita: In Memory of Yukio Tani  
Carolyn Shimizu: In Memory of Mary Shimizu  
D/M Paul Yamashita: In Memories of Herb & Rose Abe

D/M John Damrose: Agape, Nichigo-Bu, Earth Angels Mission  
Helen Hanashiro: Thanksgiving Offering  
Mine Ikeda: Memorial Bricks Fund  
M/M Marc Juteau: Love Offering  
Hanako Lord: Thanksgiving Offering  
Jeannie Matsumoto: In Appreciation for the UJCC & Friends Art Show  
Mae Morita: In Honor of Larry & Lorrie Yamada  
Mae Morita: Healthy Church Initiative, Senior Care Response Team  
Joan Nakamura: Friends Care  
M/M Gus Pendleton: Building Fund  
M/M Gregg Saito: Thank you for prayers for brother Pat's healing  
M/M Gregg Saito: Agape  
Jane Taniguchi-Allen: Reiko, Marie, Anthony, David

Tamar & Janna Bedoyan: Donation  
Helen Hanashiro: Year End donation  
Joanne Kagiwada: Donation  
D/M Gregory Miyake: Year End donation  
Mae Morita: Year End donation  
Tomoko Naito: Year End donation  
Toshi Sakai: Year End donation  
M/M Craig Shimizu: Donation  
Audrey Shoji: Donation  
M/M Calvin Tange: Donation  
Ann Yoshimura: Year End donation

**CHRISTMAS OFFERING**

M/M Robert Chung  
Helen Hanashiro  
Joyce Imai  
Blanca Katsura  
Charlene Kiyuna  
M/M David Kreller  
M/M Jeff Kurushima  
Hanako Lord  
Mae Morita  
Stan Morita  
Tomoko Naito  
M/M Patrick Oh  
Mel Renge  
M/M Kevin Watkins  
D/M Paul Yamashita

**COMMUNITY CARE**

M/M Robert Chung  
Christine Moss  
M/M Mike Swezey

**TOMODACHI**

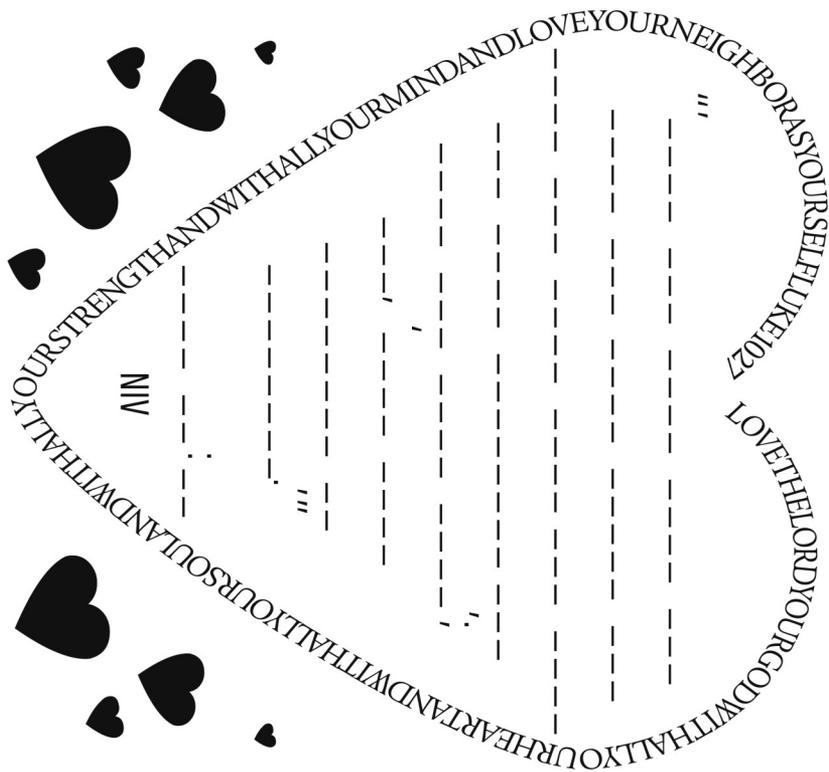
Yoko Lund  
Tomoko Naito  
Gayle Oki

**VORP**

Donna Chiamori  
M/M Dale Ikeda  
Mine Ikeda  
Joyce Imai  
Hope Kawashima  
D/D Ernie Kazato and Carolyn Sakauye  
Amy Kiritani  
D/M Ken Kurokawa  
Day Kusakai  
Irene Leach  
Kaye Migaki  
Evelyn Mitarai  
Akiko Miyake-Stoner  
M/M Glenn Nakaguchi  
D/M Lindsay Takeda  
Bill Tokumoto

# Puzzle!

Draw lines to separate the words in the heart outline. Then, starting with "Love," write the words in order inside the heart to complete the two greatest commandments.



Answer: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, Love your neighbor as yourself." Luke 10:27, NIV