



January-February 2026

Good News

Morgan Hill United Methodist Church

The Season of Lent

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor

Lent is a season in the church. Lent lasts 40 days excluding the Sundays. The 40 days comes from the beginning of Jesus' ministry where Jesus spends 40 days in the wilderness. Jesus spent the time being tested by the devil, fasting, and praying. Likewise, during the period of Lent, we are called to a time of reflection of where we are in our spiritual life, praying, and focusing on the suffering of Jesus at the end of his earthly life.

Many people decide to "give up" something to remind them of the sacrifice of Jesus. If you decide to give something up, make it something you like. Some people give up a favorite soft drink or desserts. Some people give up a favorite TV show or playing video games. As we mentioned last year, some declare a social media fast for one day a week or some other time period.

Other people decide to add something new. Some people decide to read a book of the Bible during Lent, or spend a specified time in prayer. Some people journal or take up walking each day. Whether you give something up or add something new, do it with intention.

Our sermon series during Lent is God's Promises. The Bible is one long story of God's continual relationship with humans. We will look at the Promises God made to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jeremiah. This sermon series is based on the book, *Remember: God's Covenants and the Cross* by Susan Robb. You can buy the book and read each chapter before Sunday, but reading each chapter is not required.

I invite you use this Lent to learn more about your own discipleship journey in which ever manner you chose.

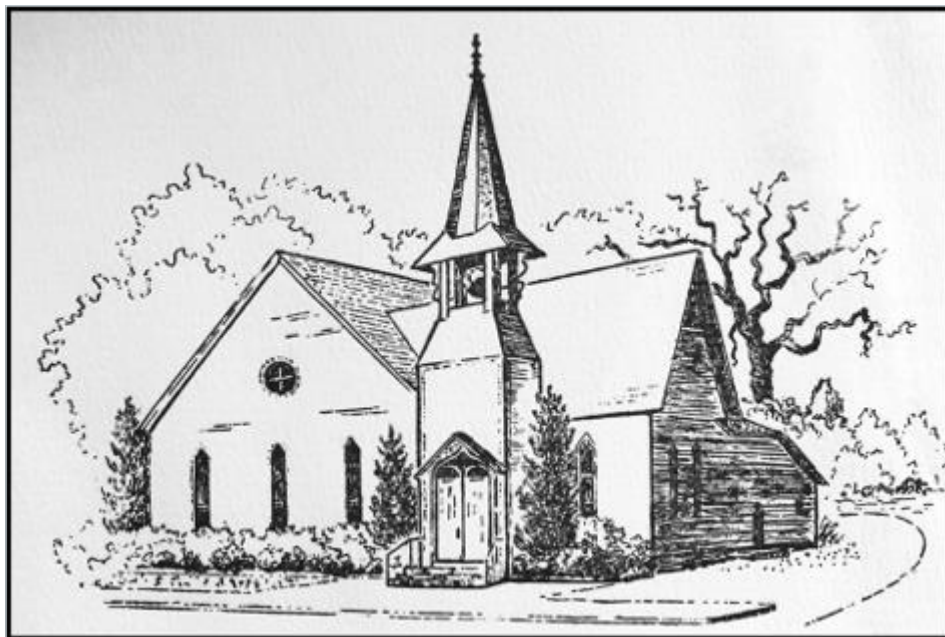


Wesley
Wisdom

For Wesleyans, Lent is a season for intense spiritual growth through practical disciplines like fasting (often weekly), prayer, self-reflection, and giving.

Key Wesleyan Practices for Lent:

- **Fasting:** John Wesley famously fasted weekly (Thursday supper to Friday 3 PM), focusing on prayer, not deprivation, to remind oneself that only Jesus is enough.
- **Prayer:** Increased prayer, often early in the morning, is central to hearing God's voice.
- **Repentance & Self-Reflection:** A time to acknowledge sin and turn back to God.
- **Giving (Almsgiving):** Donating to the needy, like food banks or UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), aligns with selfless living.
- **Spiritual Disciplines:** Engaging in deep study and receiving God's undeserved favor (grace).



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Morgan Hill United Methodist Church

17175 Monterey Hwy
 Morgan Hill, CA 95037

669.888.3880

office@mhunc.com

www.mhunc.com

Leadership Team

Pastor: Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook
 Administrative Asst.: Bettie Anderson
 Minister of Young Generations: Dr. Haley
 Feuerbacher
 Children's Education: Jeannie Clayton
 Finance Team Leads: Marilyn Pifer,
 Wendy Ringo
 Lay Leaders: Denise Melroy, Megan
 Richardson
 Annual Conf. Rep: Trish Catalano
 Prayer Team: Megan Richardson
 Membership Secy: Jeannie Clayton
 Mission/Outreach Co-Chairs: Cathy
 Coates, John McCotter
 Newsletter Editor: Bettie Anderson
 Website Editor: Denise Melroy
 Nominations & Leadership Dev. Chair:
 Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook
 Staff-Parish Relations Chair: Carol Frazer
 Treasurer: Wendy Ringo
 Trustees President: Darcy Foster
 Worship Team Lead: Denise Melroy

We are a Reconciling Church.
 All are welcome!



Next Good News deadline:
 February 25, 2026
 For March/April Issue

Pastor's Prose: Spirit of Christmas 2025

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor



I am supposed to be writing something for the January/February issue of our 2026 newsletter. Somehow, I am just not into 2026 yet. Now I know it will be a great year. We just hired a new choir director, and our children's and youth programs are growing in numbers and in depth. I am looking forward to being part of this community another year.

I am still some place in the spirit of Christmas 2025. Perhaps because I felt far behind most of Advent. I did take some time for devotions and reflection, but things like sending cards were much later than normal.



smallest one I have. One of the pictures is the classic Lenox white nativity set. I found the picture online because I don't have room to set up that set.



As part of my reflection time, I studied the many nativities that I have. The olive wood one was bought in Israel and shipped home. The "cave like" stable is made from one piece of wood, and reminds me of the part of the world where Jesus was born.

Each of the other nativities holds a special significance. Some for the artistic talent, some for the focus on Mary, Joseph and the baby, some for where I purchased them (in my travels e.g., El Salvador) some for the people and animals included in the scene, and the newest one which I received this year and is the



As I reflected what kept coming to me was Jesus and the fact that we are loved by Jesus. In the last year, I have collected some things I have read or heard people say about Jesus' love.
(continued on page 4)

Pastor's Prose: Spirit of Christmas 2025 (continued from page 3)

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor



The one saying that has stuck with me more than any other is that Jesus command to love is not a command to feel something, but a command to do something.

When we talk about being disciples, we are talking about doing something. And the doing is about helping others. And the doing is about speaking out when we see injustice. And the doing is about seeing with our eyes and hearing with our ears to understand where there is a need and fulfilling that need.



This church is doing wonderful things to help others. We serve a meal on Wednesday nights. We helped 5 families have a better Christmas than they had originally planned. Every day I am aware that someone in our church family reaches out to another person in our church family who needs a hug, a meal, an encouraging word, or just someone to listen. I am so happy to be part of this vibrant community.

So Happy New Year to all! May we continue to grow in Jesus' love and always be doing.

Sermons January 4th to Ash Wednesday

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor

Each year the first Sunday in January (this year January 4th), we retell the story of the wise men visiting the Christ child. It is called Epiphany, and epiphany means an "aha" moment with new significant insight. It was the wise men who had an epiphany that this baby was the Messiah.

The second Sunday (January 11th) of the new year is remembering Jesus' baptism. The baptism is when Jesus is recognized by John the Baptizer as the Christ. Each year, we offer everyone the opportunity to remember their own baptism with a sprinkling of water.

The third Sunday (January 18th) we will begin a sermon series on some of the characteristics of being a disciple.

- The first Sunday the characteristic is listening.
- The Second Sunday the characteristic is community (What it means to be part of a community.)
- The third Sunday the characteristic is work. (How our work may be very different, but all honors God.)
- The fourth and final Sunday before Ash Wednesday the characteristic is mindfulness.

Hope to see you on Sundays.

On Sunday January 11th after the worship service, the Leadership Team and any others who want to join will meet to decide on the goals for 2026. Everyone is invited to join in this meeting. The goals follow the practice of smart goals; meaning specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. (The time bound is 2026.) These goals will serve as priorities in the coming year. If you have ideas or interest in helping to set the goals, plan to attend. If you are interested, but can't attend, then email me or any other member of the Leadership Team to tell us your thoughts. We want these goals to belong to the entire congregation. See you there.



Unclobbering the Bible: A Learning Retreat

By Dr. Haley Feuerbacher, Minister of Young Generations

January 17, 2025, 10:30am-5:00pm

How do we make sense of the Bible passages often used to condemn LGBTQIA+ people? What if the Bible is full of affirmation and celebration of queer identity rather than condemnation?

Join **Dr. Haley Feuerbacher**, Minister of Young Generations at MHUMC and director of *The Rewilding Ministry*, for a transformative retreat where we'll explore what Scripture really says, how certain texts - known as "clobber texts" - became weaponized, and how we can reclaim the Bible as a source of life, liberation, and joy.

Together we will:

- Learn key terms and why "clobber texts" are misunderstood
- Explore biblical passages that affirm queerness and diversity
- Discover queerness in nature, history, and Christian tradition
- Practice tools for building courageously queer-affirming communities
- Engage in reflection, connection, and creative worship

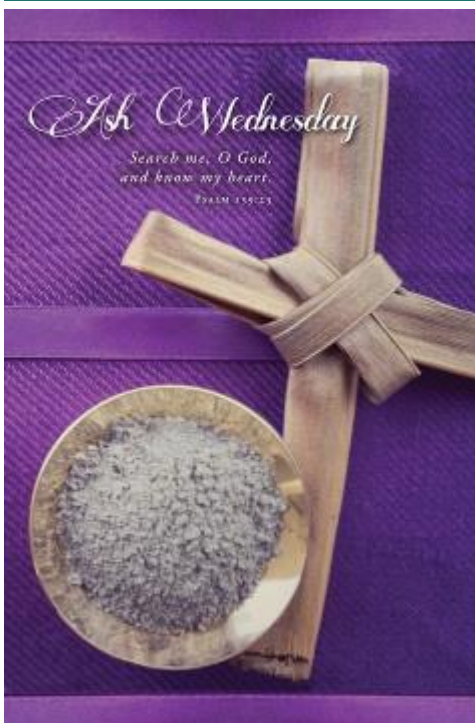
This retreat is for LGBTQIA+ people seeking reclamation and joy, as well as allies who want to learn with heart, humility, and love. This is a space for open-minded learning and questions - not debate - and where every person's story is sacred.

Please bring:

A journal + pen, anything that helps you feel grounded (tea, blanket, comfortable clothes, etc.), and one item that represents something unique or delightfully "you" to help us build a shared sacred space.

Ash Wednesday—February 18th

By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor



Ash Wednesday is the first day of the season of Lent. (See the article on Lent, page 1.) This year Ash Wednesday is on February 18th. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of preparation for the understanding of the death and resurrection of Christ.

We will hold a service at 7 pm. During the service we are reminded of our mortality. We also will have ashes placed on our foreheads or hands. In the Bible, sprinkling oneself with ashes was traditionally a sign of one's sorrow for having committed sins.

The particular symbolism of ashes for this day comes from a practice in the Roman Catholic churches in which the ashes from the palms used in the preceding year's Palm Sunday celebration are burned and blessed. With these ashes, the priest on the first day of Lent marks a cross on the forehead of each worshiper. This practice has become a part of Ash Wednesday services in many United Methodist churches. Here at Morgan Hill UMC our ashes are not from our palms, but they still hold significance for us as we begin the season of reflection and self-examination.

Community Solutions Holiday Giving Program Christmas 2025

By Denise Melory



Creating Opportunities • Changing Lives



**Adopt a Family
Holiday Giving Program**

I'm so grateful and in awe of our small congregation for fulfilling all the needs and wishes of Community Solution's vulnerable families that were recipients of the Holiday Giving Program. We adopted 5 families (there are larger organizations who don't take this many families) and we had about 75 tags on our gift board. Now, I did combine a few of the family member's needs into one tag if the needs were small items e.g. Socks, underwear, etc. Some of my friends in the community, who know we do this every year, took several gift tags as well but the majority of the gift tags went to you, as church members. I'm just humbled at the outpouring of kindness and love in making sure all these gift tags were taken and gifts were bought. Many people bought extra things

for these families, as well. With the extra gifts bought, I estimate that there were about 85-90 gifts. We also received over \$400 in additional gift cards from Target, Safeway, and Walmart.

I thank each one of you from the very bottom of my heart for making such an impact in these families lives, some of which, have very little. Your generosity just warms my heart!

Thank you very much for participating and for making a difference in so many lives.



Prepare Ye the Way

**DECORATING THE CHURCH
DECEMBER 2025**



Coming in January 2026! Studio Youth Collective

By Dr. Haley Feuerbacher, Minister of Young Generations

Come alive. Be the glimmer. Change the story.

This January, Morgan Hill UMC is launching Studio Youth Collective, a new ministry for young people seeking faith, justice, courage, creativity, and community. Created in partnership with The Rewilding Ministry, Studio is a queer-affirming, progressive, and trauma-transformative space where youth and young adults can belong deeply, explore big questions, come alive together, and change the story of trauma for themselves and our world.

Studios are messy places. They are spaces to play, imagine, question, make mistakes and breakthroughs alike, and transform chaos into masterpieces. In the same way, Studio Youth Collective isn't just another youth group - it's where youth and emerging adults can ***practice the brave and messy art of coming alive together***. It will be a studio for rewilding faith, telling the truth about what doesn't give life, imagining what's possible, and co-creating a braver, more loving world.

Inspire Youth Group: A Studio Ministry, Sunday Evenings

Sunday evenings offer a queer-celebrating, progressive faith space where youth explore scripture, justice, and liberation through story, movement, prayer, art, and real talk. We'll follow Jesus as young theologians and prophetic dreamers of a rewilded faith, rooted in liberation, compassion, and belonging and growing together through worship, play, and deep community.

Open Studio + Studio Workshops, Wednesdays

Wednesday afternoons we will open our building for **Open Studio**, a drop-in space to study, draw, unwind, play games, make art, eat snacks, talk, and just *be*. Free. Low-pressure. A safe landing spot for the after-school hours.

In the evening we shift into **Studio Workshops** - rotating series where youth can dive into:

- Nature + rewilding wisdom
- Art, writing, and creative expression
- Mental health and embodied wellbeing
- Play, movement, and adventure
- Justice, activism, and community care
- Leadership and sacred storytelling

Think of it as youth ministry meets art studio meets spiritual greenhouse meets justice lab - a place where we can ***practice the brave and messy art of coming alive together***.

Why Studio?

Because young people deserve a faith that feels like belonging.
Because the world needs their wild visions of love and justice.
Because when youth come alive, the church and our world come alive too.

More details to come! For now, mark January 2026, pray for this ministry, spread the word, and get excited. A new thing is growing - and it's brave, creative, and beautifully alive!

Book Study During Lent—March 4th and March 18th

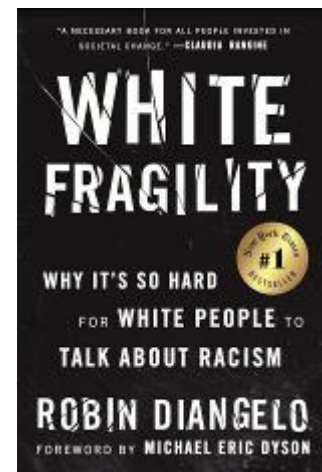
By Rev. Dr. Linda A. Holbrook, Pastor

I recently picked up a book I had bought a couple of years ago and began reading. The book is *White Fragility: Why it's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* by Dr. Robin DiAngelo. Robin DiAngelo is an academic, lecturer, and author and has been a consultant and trainer on issues of racial and social justice for more than twenty years.

Growing up in the south, I knew that I had learned early on about the basis for white people over other groups (in the south especially African Americans). This book helped me see new perspectives. Let me give you an example unrelated to racism. When women wanted the right to vote they marched, gave speeches, tried to influence as many people as possible. However, no matter how vocal or active the women were, the vote would never have been given to them without the people who held power at the time. It depended on the United States Congress to start the process of the Amendment to the Constitution. And, since Congress was almost all men, it took men to believe that the change was needed and that women should be allowed to vote. DiAngelo points out that it is always the people in power who must endorse the change.

The New York Times says that the “best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality.”

I will be leading a book study during the Lenten season. We will meet via zoom on Wednesday March 4th and March 18th at 7 pm. The book can be obtained via Amazon. If you will save your receipt and turn it in to the office, you will be reimbursed. Please join the group for what will likely be a lively discussion of Dr. Robin Di Angelo's book.



Interfaith

Thanksgiving

Service 2025



Lessons From Our Sunday School Children

By Megan Richardson, Sunday School Teacher



In November, we focused on eating as a spiritual art of gratitude, self-care, community and justice. We feed people, animals and the earth because all are loved by God. Our craft was to fill pinecones with suet and seeds to hang in the church courtyard and feed the birds, squirrels or whatever showed up....and they did!



Remember that each person is sacred and deserves a seat at the table.

Everybody needs food, rest, kindness, and safety.

2. Notice what they need.

1. See God in everyone

Eating as Justice

4 STEPS TO BUILD GOD'S DREAM TABLE

Share, invite, redistribute, speak out, come for creation — that's how justice happens.

4. Make the table bigger.

3. Feel with them.

Justice begins when we listen to someone's feelings and care about what they're going through.

Take-Home Challenge: Body Care Food Drive

This week, choose one way to feed someone with love:

- Make a snack for a friend.
- Help make part of a family meal.
- Put together a "snack bag" to give someone who needs care.
- Scatter seeds or scraps to feed birds, animals, or soil.

Family Talk

- Where do we see unfairness in how food is shared?
- What do you think God feels when people go hungry even though there's enough?
- How can our family help build a bigger table this week?

December was focused on the spiritual art of Gifting and looking for the love in every gift given and received. Gifting deepens relationship and changes us because it isn't a transaction but a transformation to make us more Christlike. We made ornaments to reflect gifting at Christmastime.

Bread for the World Offering of Letters—November 30

By Susan Armstrong, Mission Team



We are grateful for the twenty members of our congregation who united in advocating for the bipartisan bill HR 1464 - The Modern WIC Act. This collective effort is a testament to our commitment to community engagement and underscores the incredible transformative power that arises from our united voices in support of meaningful legislation. By participating in this vital initiative, we not only amplify our voices but also weave ourselves into a larger narrative of compassion and unwavering support for families in need. Together, we have the opportunity to inspire positive change and uplift our community, reaffirming our church's pledge to engage actively in the social issues that resonate deeply with us all.

Learn more here: [Bread.org/OL](https://bread.org/OL)

Sharing the Bounty

By Nancy Domnauer, Mission Team



As we reflect on the year, the Missions Team would like to thank everyone who has supported and continues to support the Sharing the Bounty program at Morgan Hill United Methodist Church. We have served over 1,330 meals since the program began in April.

In collaboration with Loaves and Fishes Family Kitchen of San Jose, we serve free, hot, take-out meals on Wednesday evenings. Volunteers from our church and community have served meals each week. Many children, families and individuals in Morgan Hill have received these warm, nutritious meals.

If you would like to volunteer, please email Nancy Domnauer at: bonjour2nancy@gmail.com or telephone the church office at (669) 888-3800.

If you can't physically volunteer, but would like to make a financial donation, please send your gift to the church office or place in the offering plate on Sunday.

Thank you everyone!



To learn more about Loaves and Fishes Family Kitchen, visit <https://www.loavesfishes.org/>





Welcome new member, Dr. Haley Feuerbacher.

Dr. Haley is our Minister of Young Generations and has joined the church on December 14th. She is a community organizer, writer, minister, and theologian who brings queer, ecofeminist, survivor-centered, and engaged approaches to faith and justice. She is excited to join the staff of Morgan Hill United Methodist Church to create brave, joyful spaces for kids and youth to explore faith, identity, and belonging through curiosity, compassion, creativity, and connection.



Welcome our new Choir Director, Jenn Oliphant.

Jenn Oliphant brings nearly 20 years of experience of working with choirs with a creative approach to music education. Vocally trained in rock and jazz, she is a skilled vocal trainer who also teaches piano, guitar, and ukulele. Her love of theatre strongly influences her musical style; she is regularly involved in theatre productions both on stage and behind the scenes. Jenn is passionate about helping singers build confidence, versatility, and a genuine connection to the music they perform.

Endowment Fund

By Marilyn Pifer, Finance Team Co-Chair

Serving our Church Today and Growing for the Future

Our Endowment Fund grew in 2025, earning enough to set aside \$2,000 for small grants to address needs of our church and community. Grant applications were accepted in November, and three proposals have been selected for funding. As in 2024, the grants will serve both our membership and the community in which we reside. The total cost of the three projects is \$2,000. Here is a short summary of the projects that will be funded.

Coffee On Main - This weekly morning ministry to day laborers in our community received a small grant in 2024 and has been selected again this year. The grant will be used to purchase supplies to warm and nourish hardworking members of our Morgan Hill community.

AED (Automated External Defibrillator) - As our church grows, having an AED on site will be a potentially lifesaving addition in case of a medical emergency. Though the cost is significant, the value of a life saved is priceless.

Worship Team Musicians - Our church is blessed to have several fine musicians who regularly enhance our weekly worship services. Our skilled pianists are central to this music ministry, but we occasionally need to engage a substitute. This grant will help provide small stipends for pianists who step in to provide the accompaniment for our music.

It is worth noting that these grants cover a significant portion of the project costs. Any shortfall will be met through special gifts from one or more members. We are blessed as a congregation that we have members who envision and articulate a need, contribute their time and their treasure to see a project fulfilled.



Creating Our Way into the New Year

By Dr. Haley Feuerbacher, Minister of Young Generations

In his book *On Fairy-stories*, J.R.R. Tolkien has his own unique word for humans: he calls us “sub-creators” - the special power we have to create new realities within our present world, reflecting God’s creative power by doing so.

Creating is part of what it means to be made in the image of God, and our young sub-creators have been locked into *creating courageously* as we end 2025 and turn towards 2026!

- This past fall, several young people noted the need for a third place for queer-affirming and justice-hearted youth and emerging adults to be, belong, and become. They formed the Studio “Dream Team,” a cohort for creating the vision of *Studio Youth Collective*, a sacred, survivor-centered space where teens and emerging adults can explore identity, justice, creativity, spirituality, play, and wellbeing in courageous community. More than a youth group, *Studio Youth Collective* will kick off in January, 2026, thanks to the courageous creativity of these young people!
- December brought joyful creativity with our Crafty Christmas Workshop and Party. Dream Team member Claire Oliphant, assisted by Jenn Oliphant, led students in making resin ornaments, salt-dough crosses, and painted art. The church became a winter wonderland when Jeannie Clayton guided snowmen-building, “ice skating,” and a wild gift-unwrapping game.



As the night ended, Christmas spirit rose with a surprise performance from the Sobrato High School Marching Band in front of the church steps!

But our creativity didn’t stop at crafting; it became courageous theology. In December, our students created a Modern-Day Nativity Artivism Project, asking the provocative question: *If Jesus were born here today, who would be gathered at the manger and how would we treat them?*

They imagined the Holy Family as unhoused neighbors, queer and trans youth, and immigrants. We then laminated their piece and displayed them along the Monterey Road fence. Their goal was bold and powerful: to remind us that all people sacred, that how we treat the

(continued on page 14)



Creating Our Way into the New Year (continued from page 12)

By Dr. Haley Feuerbacher, Minister of Young Generations

vulnerable is how we treat Christ, and that seeing each other as the Nativity might change everything. Do we see what they see?



2025 was a year of casting vision for transformative space and courageous community where young people can know they are sacred and connect with a God who has something to say to the realities of their lives. 2026 will be about **Audacious Creativity** - about daring to create what we long for, even if others can't yet see the vision. Our God is a God of creativity, and our world needs young people who are courageous enough to dream bigger and create bolder in ways that en flesh the Holy Spirit in our midst.

"Behold, I am doing a new thing," God says, "do you perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the desert." Our young sub-creators are springing up!

SPRC (Staff/Parish Relations)

By Janet Braslin

A friendly reminder for the new year — Our SPRC Committee serves as a liaison between the pastor, staff and the congregation. We believe that clear communication between these groups is vital for a well-functioning and happy church! If you as members of the congregation should have any issues, compliments or concerns regarding a church-related matter, please contact any member of this committee as listed below. If you choose to remain anonymous, your wish will be honored. The issue will be discussed and resolved to the best of our ability.

Here are the SPRC members and contact information.

Carol Frazer (Chair) 408-779-2352, Jeannie Clayton 408-981-4034, Kiowa (K) Ohene-Nyako 408-607-3817, Janet Braslin 408-910-9194



Menu

Worship Fully. Love Boldly.
Welcome All.
 Join Us Sundays 10am

**Check out our new website at
 MHUMC.com**

Upcoming Community Events



The Other Place
Psychological Mystery
 Jan 16 - Feb 01, 2026



High School Musical
Teen Musical
 Feb 20 - Mar 14, 2026



Find more
 information
 and tickets at svct.org

Upcoming Birthdays

January

FEBRUARY

January 2	Ollie Morris
January 4	Stephen Cole
January 5	Isabella "Izzy" Oliphant
January 14	Cadence "Cady" Oliphant
January 21	Michael Odneal
January 23	Brenden Oliphant
January 26	Francis Mattia
January 28	Janet Braslin
January 28	Susan Armstrong

February 6	Nicolas Odneal
February 12	Janet Ohene-Nyako
February 12	Oliver "Ollie" DeGolyer
February 13	Robert Ringo
February 18	Barry Morgan
February 21	Genevieve "Genie" Oliphant
February 26	Linda Holbrook

See all holidays and special days at nationaltoday.com/

You are welcome here!

As a Reconciling Congregation, we celebrate God's welcome to us and to all people, including any who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender and their families. At Morgan Hill UMC, your friendship is valued and safeguarded. You are accepted for who you are. You have a home! *Reconciling Ministries Network* www.rmnetwork.org

