

LMUMC is part of an ecumenical group, Oakland Churches Together (OCT)

By Marlene Yamashita

You might remember the interfaith Good Friday service held earlier this year at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church on Lakeshore Ave. For those who attended, it was a meaningful and deeply moving experience attended by 100+ people of various denominations.

The service was planned by the clergy from St. John's Episcopal, Park Blvd and Montclair Presbyterian churches, Corpus Christi Roman Catholic, St. Paul Lutheran, Lakeshore Baptist, and Lake Merritt United Methodist. They began meeting in 2022 to come up with ideas for local churches to get to know one another, eventually resulting in a Feb-Mar 2023 Lenten series that showcased local Christian churches.

The group found it so helpful and lifegiving to meet together, that they've been doing so monthly ever since! The interfaith Good Friday service was this year's event. Several months ago, it occurred to them that decisions about how to continue fostering relationships among these congregations should not be done on the part of clergy exclusively, so they encouraged each church to find laity representatives. Both Daniel Strauss and Marlene Yamashita said "yes" to the opportunity to represent Lake Merritt UMC.

In May, this separate group composed of laity representatives began monthly meetings to discern partnership opportunities between our congregations. I'm thrilled to report that this lively and proactive group has already agreed on goals and some group activities.

We call ourselves **Oakland Churches Together (OCT)**. Our goal is to share resources with each other so that our service efforts are amplified. This can result in joint outreach, enhanced unity, sharing the Holy Spirit and lots of fun :)

To accomplish these goals, we have formed five subcommittees:

- ❖ Hospitality and Fellowship: Look for a caroling party by Lake Merritt in December.
- ❖ Community Service Projects: Quarterly offerings, for example, participation together in Project Peace.
- ❖ Joint Activities and Services: film screenings and discussion. The upcoming screening of "Bad Faith" at LMUMC is OCT's first ecumenical event.
- ❖ Shared communications and trainings: develop brochure, community events board on Google docs and articles like this one.
- ❖ Small Group offerings: finding common interests and ways to further connect people.

The next meeting is Thur Sept. 5th at Lake Merritt United Methodist Church. If you want to join us at this brainstorming meeting or if you have questions/suggestions, please talk or email either Marlene Yamashita (maryamca@att.net) or Daniel Strauss.