

Don't Gamble with Aloha!

Religious groups do not always agree on all the issues but when it comes to gambling, there seems to be consensus among the interfaith community in Hawai'i: "Don't Gamble with Aloha!"

That's the motto of Hawai'i Coalition Against Legalized Gambling (HICALG), an alliance of citizens and organizations committed to preventing legalized gambling in Hawai'i. Of its 40 member organizations, 25 are religious groups representing a variety of Christian denominations, including the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ, as well as Buddhist, Muslim and Jewish faiths.

Despite the influence of multi-billion-dollar gambling lobbies, Hawai'i remains one of only two states in the country without legalized gambling. Dianne Kay, HICALG President, said she has been told that some legislators believe HICALG is the most powerful anti-gambling organization in Hawai'i.

"We can't lobby because we're a 501(c)3," said Dianne. "But because of our 40 member organizations—the main religions in Hawai'i and others—the legislators listen to us."

Since the opening of the 2013 legislative session on January 16, thirty-one gambling bills have been introduced. Thirteen of these bills support gambling and include bills such as HB145, which would grant a twenty-year license for one stand-alone casino in Waikiki, and SB1376, which would authorize a lottery in Hawai'i. Dianne said that unlike previous years, legislators are now divided nearly 50/50 between supporting and condemning legalized gambling.

"More legislators are supporting gambling now than in the past and we're not sure why," she said. "It's a reason for concern, but we feel the general public does not want a little Las Vegas here."

Another concern for HICALG is the Products Direct and Winner Zone arcade sweepstakes machines, both legal in Hawai'i. Products Direct terminals offer a product or service at a

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Meet General Synod Delegates

Twelve delegates, two from each of the five Associations and two Associate Delegates, will represent the Hawai'i Conference at General Synod 29 to be held June 28-July 2 in Long Beach, California. The article below introduces four of the twelve delegates. The remaining eight will be featured in the next two issues of The Friend.



Aletha Kaohi (Kaua'i Association) is no stranger to leadership in the Hawai'i Conference. She currently serves as Chair of the Formation Missional Team and President of the Kaua'i Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches. She has also served as President of the Conference Board of Directors, President of the State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches, and President of the Kaua'i Association.

Aletha first attended General Synod 24 years ago and last year as a delegate, she recognized the changes. She said the delegates were more multi-ethnic, and she appreciated how the "business, music, and the youth were woven into an exceptional experience."

This year she is looking forward to telling the Hawai'i story at the luncheon that will be co-sponsored by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches with Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries. She is also looking forward to being part of the decision-making of the UCC and, of course, meeting old and new friends.

Welina Tong (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches) is a youth-at-large member of the Hawai'i Conference Council. She is also very active in her church serving as a lay reader and praise and worship music leader. Welina, a senior at Kamehameha Schools Hawai'i, won this year's State wrestling championship in her weight class.



Although Welina has never attended General Synod before, she has attended the National and Regional Youth Events. "They were awesome," she said. "It's so great to interact with other youth within the United Church of Christ that share the same interest in God that you share."

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Image Makeover

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

This Lent I've been thinking a lot about something in particular. Actually, I've been thinking about it since December when I was out on a long run. Usually, while running, my mind flits around from this to that, random thoughts that come and go. This particular thought, however, absorbed me from start to finish and lingered like a slow-burning coal ever since. Then it flared up as Lent began.



That's because I saw pictures of thousands of couples getting married simultaneously in Korea. This was another mass wedding staged by the Unification Church. It surprised me because I thought the church had faded into oblivion with the death of its colorful founder, Sun Myung Moon, the self-proclaimed messiah whose followers were once called "moonies." Evidently I was wrong. Here was the church again attracting attention through odd or unusual stunts like this.

So, this Lent, I have been thinking a lot about this: Christianity has an image problem.

Some might say there's no worry since the Unification Church is borderline, or not even, Christian. But that's a fine point lost in news reports. There are plenty of other things that create and reinforce a negative view of Christianity. Every time an individual manages to attract attention for spewing out messages of hate or intolerance in the name of God, or for using the Bible to predict the coming of doom and the day the world will end, the image suffers. Stories of clergy who commit sexual abuse, and church officials who know about it and then either cover it up or look the other way, are serious and could tarnish the Christian "brand" irreparably.

What most concerns me are youth and young adults. Anecdotally, I hear from teens who are turned off by Christianity. A Barna Group (barna.org) study in 2007 bears this out. Among the results was that only 16% of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties had a "good impression" of Christianity. And even among Christian young adults, half thought that Christianity was too judgmental, highly hypocritical, overly political, and just simply "old-fashioned and out of touch with reality."

Since this does not bode well for the future of Christianity and the church, my Lenten reflections have focused on how to give Christianity an "image makeover." Is there something we can do to improve its image or to create a more positive impression?

Given how large, diverse and diffuse Christianity really is, I don't think there are any "macro" or systemic answers, that is, solutions that would address the overall popular or world view. Except prayer, of course. But I believe there are "micro" and personal things we can do to offer an image of Christianity that

is more favorable, or, more importantly, more like Christ. Here are a couple suggestions:

1) *Know your brand of Christianity.* We might as well accept that there is not, and never will be, one brand of Christian faith. That won't stop people from thinking there is, but the more we know what we believe, the better we'll be able to explain that to someone who is critical.

Christianity has an image problem.

At a community organizing event, I sat at a table with a woman who greeted me by saying, "The problem with you Christians is that you preach turning the other cheek, being meek and doing nothing. How does that solve our community's problems?" Needless to say, we had a discussion of what Jesus meant by the "other cheek" and how his meekness was far from weakness. I doubt I changed her mind, but I think I got her to realize that Christianity was much more than she understood.

2) *Practice what Jesus preached.* It does no good to fret about what the world thinks of Christianity. But it does an immense good to do what Christ asks of us.

In the 2007 Barna study mentioned earlier, youth and youth adult participants were asked to share their impressions of Christianity.

One of the common themes was "Christianity is changed from what it used to be" and "Christianity in today's society no longer looks like Jesus." These comments were the most frequent unprompted images that young people called to mind, mentioned by one-quarter of both young non-Christians (23%) and born again Christians (22%).

This is a good reminder that our goal in any image makeover is not for the sake of improving how we, or Christianity as institution or religion, look. That's a superficial makeover. The real makeover is repentance, that is, a re-turning or re-orienting ourselves to Christ, by hearing his command to love God and neighbor and following his path and example all the way to the cross. Practicing what Jesus preached will reveal an image—the image of God—which is the only one that will endure and make a real difference in the end.



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God is still speaking

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Seminary Scholarships Demonstrate Special Commitment to Hawai'i

There are seven seminaries of the United Church of Christ that have been recognized by the General Synod for their special relationship to the UCC. Of those, two have recognized the sacrifice and the high cost of attending seminary, especially for students from Hawai'i, and have created special designated scholarships to make it possible for Hawai'i students to afford seminary.

Chicago Theological Seminary (CTS) has several scholarships for Hawai'i students. One, named after one of Hawai'i's most well-known ministers, is the Abraham Akaka Scholarship.



Although the Rev. Akaka (pictured left) died in 1997, his legacy of aloha, which includes 41 years as pastor in Hawai'i churches, lives on through the Akaka Ministries Foundation. A fund established by the Foundation grants tuition assistance to a Hawaiian or Asian student each year to attend Chicago Theological Seminary.

In 2011, the Akaka Foundation expanded the funds available for this scholarship to ensure a path to CTS

for Hawaiian students and to meet inflation rates. According to publicity material from the seminary, the Rev. Akaka Aloha Room was established that year to "recognize not only a remarkable alumnus and the scholarship but also an attempt to bring Kahu's spirit of Aloha into the CTS classroom."

Gwendolyn (Nani) Hill, Pastor of Hanapepe Hawaiian Church, is a recent recipient of the Akaka Scholarship. The award allowed Nani to complete her studies for a Doctor of Ministry degree in preaching in 2010.

Pacific School of Religion (PSR) in Berkeley, California, has a Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ Scholarship Fund, valued at more than \$45,000, which makes a positive difference in the lives of Hawai'i's students. Many Hawai'i Conference churches and individuals contribute to this scholarship each year.

Terry Ogawa, a third-year M.Div. student at PSR, is the most recent recipient of that award, which covered her tuition this academic year. Terry, a member of Church of the Crossroads and a Member in Discernment with the O'ahu Association, is also pursuing a certificate in Asia and Oceania Cultures and Faith Traditions at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

"The promise that an endowment provides—that it will offer scholarship support not only for this year but for every year in the future—allows PSR to use these resources to attract the most promising new leaders, students whose faith has led them to be part of a bold religious vision for social change,"

wrote PSR President Riess Potterveld. "[Hawai'i Conference] gifts help them graduate and enter post-seminary life with that vision uncompromised and unlimited by the burden of student debt."

The school also has three other scholarships, all named after PSR graduates who went on to serve churches in the Hawai'i Conference: the Teruo Kawata Endowment; the Kealahou Alika Scholarship Fund and the Wallace Fukunaga Endowment.

For more information on these and other available scholarships, contact any of our UCC seminaries.

(Meet the Delegates, continued from page 1)

Welina said she is looking forward to the workshops and gaining new insights about other cultures, beliefs and faith. "I'm also looking forward to interacting with past and new friends and just having a good time being children of God," she added.



Kalani Wong (Tri-Isle Association) serves on the Formation Missional Team and is a past president of the Tri-Isle Association.

Although this will be his first General Synod, Kalani said he has appreciated the way that Hawai'i was well-represented last time by Caroline Belsom, a member of Waiola Church

who served as the General Synod Associate Moderator in 2011.

"I look forward to seeing the UCC as a whole, the spectrum of who we are as a church," said Kalani, speaking about this year's Synod. "The youth of my church have been to the Synod and the Western and National Youth Events and have come back with great experiences. I hope to do so as well."

Pearl Misa Lau (O'ahu Association) is a former O'ahu Association Board member and will be attending General Synod for the second time as a delegate.



Pearl said that what she appreciated most about her first General Synod was witnessing the diversity of the UCC and learning more about what is happening in the denomination.

Pearl said she enjoys the work of a delegate. "I'm a General Synod nerd. I like learning about the issues and participating in discussions, so I am looking forward to that and to meeting the other Hawai'i delegates and delegates from around the country."

Have you remembered the Hawai'i Conference in your will?

Church Leaders Event

Over one hundred people from throughout the Hawai'i Conference gathered for the Church Leaders Event held at Nu'uauu Congregational Church on Saturday, February 2. UCC Conference Attorneys, meeting in Hawai'i that week, served as resource persons for the event.



Churches Live Out Extravagant Welcome

Whether it be through programs to help the houseless and feed the hungry, sharing facilities with other congregations or making their buildings accessible to all, Hawai'i Conference churches are doing their part to model extravagant welcome.

Houseless Ministry

Pheonix Freeman is one of six houseless people tending to the nearly one-acre garden at the Church of the Pacific on Kaua'i. A lack of family support and mental illness prevented him from attending college, leaving him hungry and without shelter from an early age. Thanks to the extravagant welcome of Church of the Pacific, Pheonix now has a place to eat, work, sleep and call home. Under the church's supervision, he gardens five days a week and sleeps in front of the sanctuary at night.

"It's extremely gratifying to be a part of this community and work land that will not only feed me, but others," he said. "Many homeless are suffering from mental disorders where they just need a little love and support from organizations like Church of the Pacific. They're doing a great job, I think."

Besides letting houseless people glean and cultivate fruits and vegetables from its garden, Church of the Pacific feeds 250 people a week through its Food Pantry program. Individuals assisted through the program are given an opportunity to give back by helping with various tasks around the church. This gives them a real sense of belonging to the community.

Other churches have also tried to allow houseless persons to sleep on the property, but issues of security and liability have prevented them from continuing the practice. Instead, these churches have turned to social service agency programs such as Family Promise, Institute for Human Services or River of Life to share in the ministry of providing shelter and food for those in need. Church of the Pacific Pastor Glenn Frazier said the most important thing is to remember that houseless people benefit the most from a sense of community.

"Most people don't find a compassionate and caring community anywhere, but when they do it can be very life changing," he said. "And to me, that's at the heart of the gospel."

Welcoming New Congregations

Until August 2010, Chuukese Congregational Church of Christ did not have a building in which to worship. Gathering at Kailua District Park for services, members longed to become part of the United Church of Christ and to worship in a sanctuary.

Their prayer was answered when Kailua Christian Church (KCC) agreed to share its worship facilities, giving the congregation an extravagant UCC welcome. But it definitely wasn't a rushed decision. Building a relationship and helping the Chuukese church understand what it means to be UCC took more than two years. In the end KCC officially approved the sharing of its facilities with this new and growing congregation.

"The congregational vote was about 80/20—80 percent in favor of sharing the facilities, 20 percent against sharing facilities," said KCC Pastor Tim Weible. "I think 80 percent is pretty strong, and is due to the fact that we allowed time for education and relationship building. If you don't create relationships you're like two ships passing in the night: you don't respect each other, don't love each other, you're strangers in the same building."

KCC leaders meet with leaders of the Chuukese congregation every other month to discuss cultural differences and understand each

other's needs. When issues arise like the proper disposal of trash or keeping the sanctuary clean, they can be addressed because an open communication process is in place.

Tim said the Chuukese Congregational Church of Christ dreams of purchasing its own property and building a church. KCC lends its facilities rent-free in hopes that the congregation will realize its ultimate goal.

"Overall it's a difficult call of ministry to welcome the stranger, but showing hospitality is an important aspect of the Christian life and calling," Tim said. "Being able to share facilities with Chuukese Congregational Church of Christ, I believe, has been critically important for Kailua Christian Church in our own walk of faith."

Wheelchairs Welcome

Manoa Valley Church is widening its welcome by making church facilities more wheelchair accessible. Undergoing a \$1.8 million renovation project, Manoa Valley Church is creating four handicap accessible bathrooms, installing an elevator and adding a senior activity room on the second floor.

Located in the church's Christian Life Center building, the new senior room will be adjacent to the church's preschool and after school program. It has been a long time coming, said Pastor Anne Findlay-Chamberlain, as Manoa Valley Church has desired a space for seniors since the 1960s.

"A lot of people who are now seniors were people who worked to make what's here possible," Anne said. "It's very much a hospitality thing. Our mission is 'radical hospitality, outreach and missions, intentional faith development and passionate worship (RIP),' so this is our way of being radically hospitable. We're the church that gives a RIP."

The renovations are expected to be completed this summer.

These are just a few of the many different ways that churches are extending extravagant welcome to others in their communities.



Members of Chuukese Congregational Church of Christ share a meal together at Kailua Christian Church.

News briefs are adapted from *UCC News*, the online news portal for the United Church of Christ. For details on these and other stories, visit www.ucc.org/news. These reports are adapted from stories written by Emily Mullins.

Award-winning Journalist to Give Keynote at General Synod

With her demanding schedule, Maria Hinojosa simply can't accept invitations or requests from every group that approaches her. In addition to being an author, lecturer and television correspondent, the Emmy-award-winning journalist keeps busy anchoring two weekly radio news programs through which she artfully tells the stories of those with voices not often heard. But when the United Church of Christ asked Hinojosa to be a keynote speaker at General Synod 29, she replied with an enthusiastic "yes." After all, like Hinojosa, the UCC also works to lift up the voices not often heard.

"This one definitely made a lot of sense," she said of the UCC's invitation. "It was not just another request. It actually has special meaning to me."

Hinojosa will lead General Synod's morning plenary session on June 29 with a keynote highlighting immigration. For the past 25 years, Hinojosa has reported on important social issues, such as women's rights and economic inequality, and is often cited as one of the most influential Hispanics in the U.S. for her journalistic excellence.

General Synod Resolutions Call for Environmental Action

While the United Church of Christ's upcoming Mission 4/1 Earth campaign will promote 50 days of earth care, the denomination's commitment to environmental sustainability is everlasting and will be put into action at General Synod 29. Four resolutions proposed call for ongoing, permanent changes for the UCC that will lessen the environmental footprint of its congregations and members and help make the world a more sustainable place.

"The message this is sending is that we are accountable for our actions and our inactions as well, and that it's really time for us to be specific about our lifestyles and the impact of our choices on other communities," said Jim Deming, UCC Minister for Environmental Justice.

The UCC's Minnesota Conference submitted a resolution urging all segments of the denomination to respond to global warming and to acknowledge that the building sector, including all UCC churches, are the largest contributing factor to climate change. The resolution calls for UCC congregations to take steps toward carbon neutrality and to encourage their members to implement the same standards at home.

A resolution from the Central Atlantic Conference is urging the UCC to work to bring an end to mountaintop removal coal mining in Appalachia and to encourage the use of

clean, renewable energy. The resolution asks that UCC congregations determine where their electricity comes from and to work to find another source if it comes from coal extracted using mountaintop removal.

The Massachusetts, Southwest, New York and Central Atlantic Conferences are calling for the UCC and its affiliates to divest from fossil fuel companies. Part of a world-wide movement, the resolution seeks to "inspire and accelerate an unswerving commitment—as stated in the UCC's Core Purpose—to 'the co-creation of a just and sustainable world as made manifest in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.'" The resolution asks the UCC and its members to stop immediately any new investments in fossil fuel companies and to divest any existing funds within five years.

And a resolution put forth by the Connecticut Conference, Pacific Northwest Conference, Ohio Conference and Litchfield North Association of the Connecticut Conference calls for support of the UCC's Outdoor Ministries and the Outdoor Ministry Association. According to the resolution, "the UCC's Outdoor Ministry camp programs are a vital complement [to] and extension of the Christian education mission of the local and wider church, a chance to embrace diversity and deepen understanding, and an opportunity for youth and all ages to fall in love with God's creation."

Southwest Conference Brings Immigration Resolution to Synod

Riding the wave of momentum around immigration reform, the Southwest Conference is proposing a General Synod resolution calling for vigorous support of reform. The resolution, which will be sent to members of Congress, encourages UCC congregations to educate, engage, and take action to make comprehensive immigration reform a reality in 2013.

"Those of us who have been fighting hard for meaningful immigration reform for a long time recognize that this was a rare opportunity for immigration reform to be put back on the table and for it to go farther and deeper than ever before," said John Dorhauer, Southwest Conference Minister. "For the UCC to be silent right now would make no sense whatsoever."

The resolution calls on UCC congregations to engage in educational work on immigration from a faith perspective, participate in border delegations, and work toward becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations. It also asks members to be actively involved in the legislative process through steps like getting involved with a local coalition, forming relationships with immigrants, joining advocacy delegations with local governments, and participating in activities like vigils, marches and interfaith services.

For a full list of proposed resolutions to General Synod 29 or for more Synod information, visit www.ucc.org/synod.

Chair-ish Maui Event Good for the Earth



Makawao Union Church is hosting its first-ever “Chair-ish (Cherish) Maui” event this spring. A unique recycling arts competition, Chair-ish Maui invites the public to transform old, rusty and unwanted fold-up chairs into salable works of art. Instead of being dumped into Maui’s landfill, these old church chairs will be decorated then entered into the Chair-ish Maui contest with the top ten winners receiving prizes. Contest entrants purchased chairs for \$15 each. After decorating them using any method they wish—e.g., painting, beading, stenciling, upholstering—the chairs will be returned to the church for judging on April 7. The top three chairs will be displayed at the annual Art of Trash show at Maui Mall from April 19 to May 10.

(Don't Gamble, continued from page 1)

discounted rate with an incidental chance to win prizes, similar to McDonald’s Monopoly game. Winner Zone terminals allow people to pay for internet usage while receiving free points to use to win up to \$5,000.

“Engineers are very brilliant in allowing a person to gamble but avoid gambling laws of a particular state,” said Tom Kay, HCALG legal counsel. “Is the person buying to play the game or for computer time to use later? The reality is a lot of internet time is never used. People use it strictly for gambling.”

In 2004, the social costs of gambling in the United States, including increased crime, lost work time, bankruptcies and financial hardships faced by the families of gambling addicts, was estimated at \$54 billion, according to Earl Grinols, Professor of Economics at University of Illinois and a former economic adviser to President Ronald Reagan.

“Once any legislation is passed to allow gambling, we’re in trouble,” said Dianne, who stressed the importance of its member organizations such as the Hawai’i Conference that enable the work of HCALG to continue.

Thanks to our friends, *The Friend* is free of charge to anyone who requests it. We offer our sincere mahalo to those who have generously given a monetary gift to help defray publication costs. A gift of \$10 will pay for one person’s subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai’i Conference UCC, 1848 Nu’uanu Ave., Honolulu 96817.



Highlights from the Website

Go to www.hcucc.org to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

Pastoral Changes

David and Ruth Sandberg completed their terms as Co-Interim Pastors of Windward UCC on January 31. They returned to their home in California.

After two years **Neal MacPherson** concluded his ministry as Interim Pastor of Lili’uokalani Protestant Church on January 31. Neal is currently serving as Interim Minister of Fairview Baptist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Conference Council Highlights

The Conference Council, at its meeting on February 9, received reports from around the Conference and approved audited financial statements for fiscal years ending 2011 and 2012. Visit www.hcucc.org for written reports presented to the Council. To obtain a copy of audited financial statements, contact the Conference Office.

Two Nominated to United Church Board

Caroline Belsom of Waiola UCC (Maui) and **Dean Wakuzawa** of Kailua Christian Church (O’ahu) are among the 36 at-large nominees to be elected at General Synod in Long Beach this July. The United Church Board will serve as the governing board for the denomination and its Covenanted Ministries.

resource List

Holy Week Resources Available

The United Church of Christ website has worship resources that can be downloaded and used for Holy Week and Easter. Visit <http://www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/> for these liturgical resources to plan your Holy Week services.



This year, in addition to Easter resources, prayers and other worship aids for “Mission 4/1 Earth,” which begins on Easter Monday, April 1, are also available for download.



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March 2013

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

March 20	Hawai'i Conference Foundation Board of Trustees Administration Missional Team
March 26	Prince Kuhio Day (Office Closed)
March 27	Stewardship Missional Team
March 28	Maundy Thursday (Office Closed)
March 29	Good Friday (Office Closed)
April 6	Conference Council
April 24	Stewardship Missional Team
April 26	Formation Missional Team
April 27	Hawai'i Island 'Aha Moku-puni Tri-Isle 'Aha Moku-puni
May 3-4	Kaua'i 'Aha Moku-puni
May 11	O'ahu 'Aha Moku-puni
May 19	Strengthen the Church Offering (Suggested Date)

Tips for Meaningful Meetings

The Tri-Isle Association 'Aha Moku-puni on January 26 focused on "Meetings that Matter." Participants learned tools for designing effective meetings, including these tips:

1. Build an agenda by asking, "What do we need to accomplish today?"
2. Demonstrate our faith in how we do our business by practicing patience and kindness and being quick to listen and slow to speak.
3. Be clear on what we want committee members to accomplish for each agenda item. For example, for each item know in advance what it is that you want members to consider. Do you want them to make corrections/additions to a document, problem solve, discuss or make a decision?
4. Remember that the Treasurers Report represents the theological work of the church.
5. Minutes record decisions that were made; people identified to carry out next steps; and deadlines for completing the work.