

# The Friend

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# Chasing the American Dream

WRYEN “KEOKI” KIWAHA, PUKA’ANA CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

I was blessed to grow up in a home that believed that the American dream was a possibility to be achieved as long as you were honest, worked hard, and did your best. Despite being honest, hardworking people who did their best and gave their all, I know my parents struggled each day to provide for our basic needs and to give us all a better chance at life. For that, I am most thankful.

As an adult, I sought to be like my parents – an honest, hardworking person who did my best and gave my all. Yet, despite my best efforts, I continue to face financial struggles – living paycheck to paycheck and falling deeper into

debt. All whilst the American dream seems to drift further away from me and my generation at an alarming speed. With it also drifts hopes for homeownership, access to quality healthcare, and the sabbath of family, rest, renewal, and anything else that does not involve work.

If we look at the statistics, it’s not hard to see why. Americans born in 1940 had a 92% chance of earning more than their parents. For those born in 1992, that has dropped to 50%. In 1965, the pay ratio from CEO to worker was 20:1. In 2016, it was 271:1. Hourly compensation of the average wage earner has not increased with the level of productiv-

ity which has skyrocketed since the 1970s. It is also clear that the remnants of the sugar plantations and the “Big Five” still maintain economic control of Hawai‘i.


Is it a wonder why so many young people and families – many who are Kānaka Maoli or have deep roots in these islands – are forced to leave our homeland for economic opportunity (not necessarily prosperity) elsewhere?

In my time as Justice & Witness Missional Team chair, economic justice was a priority for our team. In June 2018, Aikea – a grassroots movement for labor justice in Hawai‘i – presented a workshop at the Western Regional Youth Event. In response to a nearly two-month long strike of Marriott and Kyo-ya Hotels and Resorts employees, our team released a statement which called upon “...Marriott and Kyo-ya Hotels and Resorts to immediately meet the demands of their hotel

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PHOTO FROM CHRISTY MACPHERSON, USED WITH PERMISSION



**God is still speaking**

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# Scripture, History, and Our Call to Action

JONATHAN ROACH, ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

The followers of Jesus have worked to address issues of food, clothing, and housing since before the birth of church. In one of his most challenging parables, The Parable of the Workers, Jesus gave us a multilayer message for today.

This parable is about the Kingdom of God yet to come and the Kingdom of God that is all around us. In this parable, we have lessons that it is never too late to start living a life of faith, and we have lessons about a living wage, opportunities to work, generosity, the last shall be first, the struggle against unemployment, and just when we think we have found every possible layer of meaning, Jesus gives us more.

I engaged it for my PhD dissertation and after all that study can honestly agree with what I wrote then: “as Jesus’ parables often do, this parable provokes and unsettles.” And down through the ages, we continue to struggle with economic justice both inside the church and outside the church from how we pay clergy to how we engage with those struggling to find housing and these issues are very present here in Hawai‘i and have been for a long time.

In 2019, I was working as the manager of the Honoka‘a Library, and it was during a walk that I learned the story of Katsu Goto from his memorial. He immigrated to Hawai‘i on February 8, 1885 from

In October 1889, Goto knew that his life was in danger, but he continued to support workers

and on the evening of October 28 as he was returning from meeting with workers, he was seized by six men from the plantations, tied up, and lynched from a telephone pole near the Honoka‘a jail. His memorial in Honoka‘a recounts, “he used his bilingual skills to achieve human dignity and fair working conditions for sugar cane workers. Many consider him a pioneer labor leader. His spirit lives on...”

The issues that Jesus and Katsu Goto raised up have not been lost in the search for justice here in the Hawai‘i Conference. In 2019, the Justice & Witness Missional Team sponsored a resolution of witness that was written by Brandon Duran. This resolution, rooted in Deuteronomy 15, declares “therefore, be it resolved that the Hawai‘i Conference of the United Church of Christ encourage all faithful disciples of Jesus to educate ourselves from a faith-based perspective within our local church setting about a holistic living wage, the effects of moving toward a holistic living wage, and the issues of income inequality; and, engage in the issues of prayerfully listening to minimum wage workers and their families share about their struggles, hopes, and needs.” This resolution was adopted by us at the ‘Aha Pae‘āina that year.

And here we are in 2023, the opportunities for this justice work are plentiful and the workers are few. Consider what work Jesus is calling you to today and look back to scripture and to our history to discern where Jesus is pointing us to go next!



Katsu Goto memorial in Honoka'a on Hawai'i Island  
PHOTO BY CHEZLANI CASAR; USED WITH PERMISSION

Darby Kathleen Ray, in her book *Working: Christian Explorations of Daily Living*, explains that when interpreters use the statement of “so the last will be first, and the first will be last” as a lens for interpreting this parable it offers “an unsettling of long-held assumptions about what counts as work, who deserves to be paid, and how work ought to be organized in the first place.” This parable asks us to value more than just production and time is money. I have been studying this parable since

Japan and worked for three years in the fields of the ‘Ō‘okala Plantation before taking over a store. Goto was on his way to becoming a very successful business owner and in addition to running his business, he started advocating for justice on behalf of other workers. Because of his English language fluency and his intolerance at workers being exploited, Goto often went to court in defense of the Japanese immigrant laborers and for this he became a target of hate and violence.



## Economics in Times of Crisis

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

There has been a beautiful overflowing of aloha toward the people of Maui as they face the aftermath of the fires. At the writing of this reflection, more than \$400,000 has been raised through the Conference's 2023 Hawai'i Wildfires Fund and more has been promised. Such outpouring of support is a part of our Christian DNA, for like Peter and John encountering a lame man in the Temple in Acts 3, we are motivated to make whole the people of God's good creation.

of help through the giving of goods is praiseworthy.

However, for us to assume that our collections of goods going to Maui are needed and wanted takes away Maui's ability to lift their own voices and to ask for the things that are important to them. As Danny Tengan, Hawai'i Conference Disaster Ministries Coordinator said, "what good is a toaster if there is no house with a plug?" He also reminds us that for every container of goods shipped to Maui, there must be a storage place for separating and organizing the materials and volunteers to do the work.

Correspondingly, unused donations create an environmental impact known as "disaster pollution" – those leftover goods which need to be disposed of. Lucy Easthope, emergency planner and author of *When the Dust Settles: Searching for Hope After Disaster*, shares, "after the 2004 (Indian Ocean) tsunami, clothes that no one had time to sort had to be piled on a beach near Banda Aceh (Indonesia), where they sat rotting until the only solution was to set them on fire." We also know that when funds are spent for shipping the cost associated with the item multiplies exponentially. Juanita Rilling, Director of the Centre for International Disaster Information in Britain, calculated the cost to supply water to 40,000 people per day at \$500 if purchased locally and anywhere from \$200,000 to \$750,000 when purchased elsewhere and shipped in.\*

Easthope encourages us, "emergency relief must be about money, not well-intentioned donations of goods." Danny Tengan said from the beginning that the best help we can send to Maui is money. Monetary donations

allow people in the affected areas to assess their own needs and to purchase goods that are impractical for goods

campaigns to acquire. Furthermore, when funds are spent by local people in local areas it is their local economy which is stimulated – a pressing need for Maui.

The Hawai'i Conference 2023 Wildfires Fund is designed to funnel monetary aid to those in need through a two-pronged approach. The first prong focuses on immediate and critical needs. Within the first six days of the fire the Conference released \$4,100 to local congregations to distribute to those affected. That was followed one week later with another \$5,000 in gift cards distributed by Tengan to crisis centers on Maui. In addition, the National UCC Hawai'i Fires Appeal released another \$10,000 for immediate and critical needs.

The second prong will position the Conference to be in partnership with Maui for long-term recovery. While details are still being finalized, this prong includes the possibility of support for ministers as they support folks affected by the fires, the rebuilding of homes, and the support of business and employment opportunities. During the August 20th Prayer for Maui service, it was stated that the "time will come" for rebuilding. Through the monetary gifts generously given to the 2023 Wildfires Fund the Conference will be appropriately aiding the sustainable assistance of Maui.

**DONATE**

Hawai'i 2023 Wildfires Relief Fund

[bit.ly/hcuccrelief](https://bit.ly/hcuccrelief)

We are working with our churches on Maui to distribute funds to those in need in devastated areas.

We are praying with Maui.

HAWAII CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

[www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org)

Since the needs are weighty, and our response is quickened by the size of the loss, we need to carefully consider how best to assist those affected by the fires. There are two typical ways we provide aid: the giving of goods and the raising of funds. The giving of goods is often thought of as the more personal touch. The sharing of personal goods with those in need allows us to participate in a more hands-on way with recovery even though we are at a distance from Kula and Lahaina. This motivation to be

\*Five Ways Foreign Aid and NGOs Can Make Things Worse When Disaster Strikes, *The Conversation*, March 2, 2016.



# RETIREMENT HOUSING FOUNDATION: Providing Affordable Housing for Seniors in Hawai'i and Across the Country

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Retirement Housing Foundation ("RHF") is a non-profit organization of 190 communities in 27 states, Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with close connections with the Hawai'i Conference. RHF was founded in 1961 by three United Church of Christ visionaries, including two clergy and a lay leader, with the goal of providing dignified, affordable housing for the elderly. Today, RHF is one of the nation's largest non-profit sponsors and managers of affordable housing, providing housing and services to more than 19,000 older adults, low-income families, and persons with disabilities, in an inclusive environment that strives to enhance their quality of life physically, mentally, and spiritually. The vision of a society in which all people have quality, affordable housing unites RHF's twelve-member board of directors, its local community boards, and a national staff of 950 people.

Though RHF serves and employs without regard to religious affiliation,

its faith-based roots are the motivation for how it approaches its mission and RHF's UCC roots are strong. A majority of the members of the RHF national board must be members of UCC churches, and its communities are recognized ministries of the UCC and are listed in the denomination's yearbook. RHF is one of the largest members of the Council for Health and Human Service Ministries (CHHSM) of the United Church of Christ. The Hawai'i Conference UCC was an original RHF member and over the years, a number of folks from the Hawai'i Conference have served long tenures on the RHF board of directors, including former Conference Minister Terry Kawata, Frank Jahrling of Kaumakapili Church, and current HCF Executive Director Andrew Bunn.

RHF has two communities in Hawai'i, the Pauahi Kupuna Hale and the Weinberg Philips Street Apartments. The Pauahi Kupuna Hale, located in the Chinatown area of Honolulu, has 48 studio and one-

bedroom units and was built in 1984 under Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 202 subsidy program. Federal rental assistance is provided to permit low- and moderate-income seniors (aged 62 years or older) or persons with disabilities to live in the units. The average resident in



Pauahi Kupuna Hale  
PHOTO FROM RHF; USED WITH PERMISSION

the complex is 80 years old with an income of about \$700 a month, mainly from Social Security, and rent is subsidized by HUD so that most residents pay about \$200 a month or about 30% of their monthly income. RHF just this year completed a \$8.5 million renovation of Pauhi Kupuna Hale and this past July had a rededication event that pulled together community, federal, state, city and Hawai'i Conference leadership.

The Philips Street project was built and opened in 1993, in recognition of the then rising cost of housing in Hawai'i. The project, central to Waikiki, Makiki, and Moiliili, consists of a seven-story building with 34 units and also provides



Rededication of Pauahi Kupuna Hale  
PHOTO FROM RHF; USED WITH PERMISSION

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## The Quest for Affordable Housing in Hawai'i

JONATHAN ROACH, ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

Even before the tragedy of the Maui wildfires and the thousands of homes that they destroyed, affordable housing was a major issue here in Hawai'i leading to the exodus of Kānaka Maoli and local people from Hawai'i to the continental U.S. to seek affordability, as Keoki reminds us in his article. On every island, for every person we see living on the streets there are dozens more living in lava tubes, camping out on beaches, living out of their cars (and looking for a safe place to park at night), and asking friends and family to take them in week by week. These are single people, couples, working families, keiki, kupuna, people in the pews in our congregations, and maybe even us at some point presently or in our past. This is a growing epidemic, and these statistics are heartbreaking.

Hope Services reports that on Hawai'i Island 30% of all households

are renting, but to afford a two-bedroom apartment on Hawai'i Island would cost at least \$1,469 per month (if you can find one). A single parent would need to be earning \$28.25 per hour to afford this. The current minimum wage is \$12 per hour so a person would need to work at least 96 hours per week at minimum wage to afford that two-bedroom apartment. In Maui County, a two-bedroom apartment would cost at least \$1,772 per month (if you could find one even before the wildfires). A single parent would need to earn at least \$34.08 per hour to afford this and at the current minimum wage the person would need to work at least 120 hours per week to afford it. On Kaua'i, a two-bedroom apartment would cost at least \$1,902 per month (if you can find it) and a single parent would need to earn at least \$36.58 per

hour to afford that, which at the current minimum wage would require that person to work 128 hours per week. On O'ahu, a two-bedroom apartment rents for at least \$2,073 per month (if you can find it) and a single parent would need to earn \$39.87 per hour to afford that, which means at minimum wage they would need to work 140 hours per week. Overall in Hawai'i, 41% of our households are renting and the challenges and statistics are daunting.

On Hawai'i Island, the faith communities in Interfaith Communities in Action have dedicated themselves to ending family homelessness. Through their signature fund, Hale ka Po'e Keiki - Homes for Children, they are raising funds and working with partner groups to create long-term sustainable solutions to end the exodus. At their recent Walk to End Family Homeless, Haili Congregational Church and Hilo Coast, UCC were the two top supporters! Whether your congregation raises funds to support local programs, works with partners like Family Promise or Habitat For Humanity, builds affordable housing, provides a safe place for families living in their cars to park overnight, addresses land back issues or reparations, or something else, our faith calls us to action.



Cara Ann Maeda, pastor of Hilo Coast UCC, joins other participants in Walk to End Family Homelessness in Hilo. PHOTOS BY ERIC ANDERSON; USED WITH PERMISSION

... Chasing the American Dream, continued from page 2

workers and agree to a contract that provides a liveable wage to these hotel workers and their families.”

In June 2019, delegates to the 197th ‘Aha Pae‘āina overwhelmingly adopted a *Living Wage Resolution* authored by Brandon Duran and sponsored by our team. The resolution states, “that every person or family should be able to be financially self-sufficient and to modestly participate in the fullness of life that God envisions for all people.” The vote of the ‘Aha recognized our commitment to end the sin of perpetuating income inequality that leads to poverty, homelessness, and the mass exodus of Kānaka Maoli and local people from Hawai‘i to the continental U.S. to seek affordability.

As part of our Christian witness, our kūleana as followers of Jesus is to boldly challenge the status quo; to work together with our community partners and our elected leaders to create policies that “...address the economic and political systems that drive people into homelessness and



poverty...”; and change course from an economy that seeks to pay workers a “minimum” for their labor to one that seeks to “create opportunities for individuals and families to lead healthy and balanced lives.”

I invite all into a conversation where we might be able to learn from one another’s experiences and be better educated about the realities

facing all people – not just millennials. Whatever we do as the body of Christ towards living out our Christian witness, we must remember that it is the **words** and the **Word** of God that lays before us a vision where all people can participate in the “fullness of life” and calls us into this sacred work of justice for all.

... Retirement Housing Foundation, continued from page 5

subsidized rental housing for low- and moderate-income elderly and persons with disabilities. The project was built under the HUD Capital Advance Program, a grant from the Weinberg Foundation, and Community Block Grant money from the City of Honolulu. Both projects have waiting lists for occupancy.

RHF is also currently working with the Hawai‘i Public Housing Authority for the development of a new 15-story 250-unit affordable housing project on School Street in Nuuanu. The project is in the final stages of planning and will use low-income housing tax credit and bond financing. The project will



Weinberg Philips Street Apartments  
PHOTO FROM RHF; USED WITH PERMISSION

have a parking structure, solar energy production, community gardens, bicycle and pedestrian pathways, gathering space, exercise and open-air spaces and a community resource

center for the provision of supportive social service for the elderly residents, and if completed, will provide a major and much need infusion of new affordable senior housing for Honolulu.

Finally, we are very grateful that RHF was a very early and significant contributor to the Hawai‘i Conference’s 2023 Wildfires Relief Fund. RHF has a strong tradition of supporting the communities they serve through the local area UCC churches, and its contribution to Conference’s effort to help those whose lives have been turned upside down by the Maui fires has been impactful.



## Partners in Support of Maui

The Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ is grateful for the support of and partnership with the national setting of the UCC as we respond to those who have been impacted by the wildfires on Maui. "As the tragic impact of these wildfires is revealed, local congregations already are providing resources and assistance to those who are affected, including gas, clothes, food and shelter," Joshua Baird, Team Leader for UCC Global H.O.P.E.\*, said. "Through this Hawai'i wildfires appeal, the United Church of Christ will increase support to immediate relief efforts and be present for the journey ahead, enabling long-term aid for persons who require assistance



with their recovery." The national offices through Global H.O.P.E. released \$10,000 for immediate and critical care. These funds will be directed by Danny Tengan, Hawai'i Conference Disaster Ministries Coordinator, as he talks with the

UCC congregations on Maui and receives a list of needs from them. We continue to be in prayer for and with our brothers and sisters on Maui.

*\*Global H.O.P.E. (Humanitarian. Opportunities. Progress. Empowerment.)*

## Support the Christmas Fund Offering

Gifts to the annual Christmas Fund special mission offering embody the spirit of the season by supporting those in need who have faithfully served the church.

Formerly known as the Veterans of the Cross offering, the fund is administered by the UCC Pension Boards and provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers, lay employees, and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas gift checks to hundreds of annuitants.

The Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is one of four UCC special mission offerings. The recommend date to receive this offering is Sunday, December 24, but local churches are encouraged to pick an Advent or Christmas date that works best for them.





# FAMILY PROMISE: A Beacon of Hope

“When you are in high school, you just want everyone to like you. You don’t want them to know about your flaws.”

Amarrah, a bright, friendly, articulate young woman has seen more than her fair share of challenges in her twenty years. The oldest of five



Amarrah

children, she suddenly found herself and her family homeless in 2019. “It was kind of scary at first, hearing that we might not possibly have a house in the next few hours.”

Her father, the sole breadwinner, was employed full-time when his place of business closed. Although he was relocated, their rent kept increasing and they quickly fell behind. Before they knew it, they were living in their car. And while they had food stamps, it was hard to go into a grocery store to get things without being seen by people they knew.

Amarrah’s family was one of the “lucky” ones who was accepted into the Family Promise program. She shares, “Family Promise made us feel safe and normal. The workers at the church made a connection with our family.” Getting to know the other families in Family Promise at the

church Amarrah’s family was staying at “let [us] know that we were not the only ones who were homeless. It felt like a home without an actual home.”

Family Promise of Hawai‘i’s mission is “to help homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence.” Since 2006, Family Promise has provided shelter, meals, case management, homelessness prevention, and stabilization services to over 4,730 family members. More than 80% of the families served have gone on to retain permanent housing. The program relies heavily on volunteers—over 1,300 volunteers are engaged annually including several of our HCUCC churches.



For Amarrah and her family, Family Promise assured them that “this is what happens sometimes in peoples’ lives, but we are not going to let you stay there. We are going to help you get back up and go forward again.” She reflected, “we just needed that little push, that little carry, to get us to where we are now. At that moment, you will take any sign, anything, just for a little bit of hope—hope for your next step.”

After a four-month stay, Amarrah and her family were able to find permanent housing. To this day, workers from Family Promise continue to check in with the family, offering a little extra support if needed.

When asked what are the most important resources families need to become independent, Amarrah listed several, including being in a good state of mind mentally. At Family Promise, the workers understand what

YZ [pronounced “wise”] literature is wisdom from the young, Generations Y and Z to be more specific. See how young people are shining, witnessing, and reflecting light.

a family is going through; it’s not just a matter of “go get a job.” Family Promise provides a support system. Also, it is not just the big things that matter; the everyday things like the ability to do laundry, to have computer access and clean clothes to wear when trying to find a job, to have diapers for your baby and body wash to take a shower—these necessities are also important and appreciated.

Churches play a major role in supporting these families. In addition to providing a safe, nonjudgmental place for families to stay together, volunteers can make a significant impact when they take the time to get to know the individual families. Rather than assuming that one knows what is best for a family, take the time to listen to their stories.

Amarrah also credits her faith in getting her to where she is today. Even during her worst days, she always had faith that better times were coming. Now she feels that “God just wants us to be there, to be a light to other families.” She is “overflowing with the love of God, just trying to pour it out onto others.”

Amarrah’s goal is to become a teacher, inspired by her musical and choral teacher. She reminds us, “Don’t give up. Sometimes it does look like the grass is greener on the other side, but where you are standing is probably the purest green there will ever be. Just because you are in that one patch of dead grass, it doesn’t mean your entire land is filled that way. There are always more opportunities, more blessings ahead.”

To learn more and see more from youth and young adults, or to submit content for consideration for future pages in *The Friend*, visit our webpage at [hcucc.org/yz-literature](http://hcucc.org/yz-literature).



## News from our Associations and Affiliates

### Prayer for Maui

In the wake of devastating wildfires that erupted in Lahaina and Kula, Maui, destroying homes, houses of worship, and businesses and resulting in the deaths of at least 115 people, over 200 people gathered online in real time on Sunday, August 20 for a Prayer for Maui service. A recording of the service can be viewed on our website.

The following are excerpts of prayers shared during the service:

"I want you to know that we are praying with you. And we offer our deepest collective embrace as we join you in grieving this great loss. For every family member, for every partner, child, friend, relation, animal companion, that has been taken in these fires, we bow to honor the many lives that have been lost and are missing."

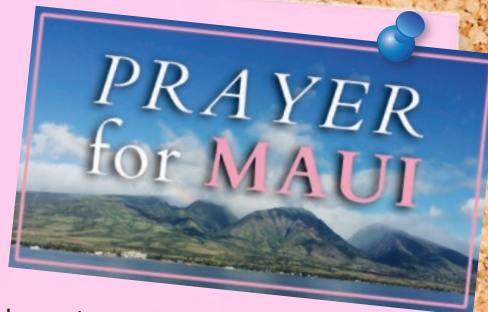
**Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister, UCC**

"Some of us cannot find the tears because we're heartbroken in this moment. And that is okay. We cannot find the words to express our grief, and that too is okay. The loss that we have experienced is tremendously great. But I just want you to know tonight that you are not alone. That in the midst of the grief and the sorrow, we are here with you praying together as community. That our tears hold together the hope that what is to come will bring healing, will relieve the pain, and will take us to a new tomorrow. But that is not this moment. In this moment, we hold each other through the grief and the pain, knowing that God is present." **Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President, UCC**

"So, all we can do in this moment is surrender these beautiful souls to you, to ask you to gently hold them for us because we are no longer able. With your Healing Spirit, comfort those who are in pain from such devastating loss and soothe all of us who weep this day and in the many hours to come." **Danette Kong, retired chaplain on Maui**

"Of course, we will attend to needs on Maui. Of course, we will assist with recovery and rebuilding. But first we must grieve. While in our past we have learned to set aside our emotions to get on with getting on, we cannot do that this time. The tragedy is too immense. The connections are too close. The weight is too heavy.

Let us grant one another the grace that it is not well with our souls and to find in that not-wellness the God who comforts those you mourn. **David Popham, Conference Minister**



Great Re-Opening and Blessing at Waineke



Inside Waineke's smaller cabin



### Waineke Cabins Are Ready to Welcome You Back!

Our Kaua'i Association UCC cabins at Waineke in Kokee State Park are back up and ready for families and congregations to make plans to use this camp facility in the near future!

The COVID years made a negative impact on a lot of our church programming (along with the closure of the camp for a couple of years due to septic challenges). Waineke Cabins are now ready to welcome folks back! Overnight use is among the least expensive on Kaua'i Island (\$50 for small cabin - up to 8 people and \$150 for large - up to 19 people).

Contact Andrea Kaohi at the Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church at 808-335-3505 or email [Wainekeministry@gmail.com](mailto:Wainekeministry@gmail.com) for available dates and reservations.

A "Great Re-Opening and Blessing" was held on August 12.



# Conference News and Highlights

Go to [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

## Pastoral Transitions



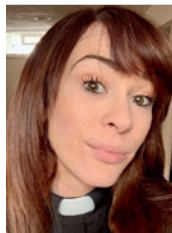
**Makana Milotta** concluded his ministry as pastor of Waipahu United Church of Christ at the end of July.

**Kyle Lovett** has been called to serve as the transitional kahu at Mid-Pacific Institute in Honolulu. She began her ministry on August 1 and will serve through the 2023 – 2024 school year, leading their chapel and partnering in their students' spiritual journeys.



**Brianna Lloyd** has been called to serve as the settled pastor of Ka Hana O Ke Akua Church on O'ahu. Her first Sunday was August 6.

**Irene Willis Hassan** has returned home to O'ahu to serve Kailua Christian Church as their settled pastor. Her first Sunday was August 6.



**Colletta Eichenberger** concluded her interim ministry with Wananalua Congregational Church in Hana, Maui, on August 20.

**Robert Eichenberger** has started a three-month interim ministry at Wananalua Congregational Church in Hana, Maui, on August 20.



**David Shon** retired from ministry on August 27 after serving as Wahiawa United Church of Christ's pastor for over 20 years.

**Lauren Buck Medeiros** has retired as Chaplain at Punahou School in Honolulu after 28 years of ministry.



**Christopher Eng** has been called to serve as interim pastor of Waipahu United Church of Christ on September 1.

**Gordon Marchant** concluded his ministry as senior pastor of Pearl City Community Church on O'ahu on August 27 and is now serving as settled pastor of Makawao Union Church on Maui.



**Cassie Chee** has been called to serve as the Bridge Pastor at Wahiawa United Church of Christ. Her first Sunday was September 3.

**Taylor Gideon** has been called to serve as the settled pastor of Waiko-loa Marshallese Ministry starting in September.

## Conference Calendar of Events

### OCTOBER 19

All COMs training via Zoom

### OCTOBER 20 - 21

AHEC Fall Halāwai

### OCTOBER 21

State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches

### OCTOBER 28

Conference Council/Board of Trustees

### NOVEMBER 4

Hawai'i Island Association Fall Mokupuni

O'ahu Association Fall Mokupuni

### A. Rushan

**Sinnaduray** has been called to serve as the settled senior minister of Central Union Church in Honolulu. His first Sunday is September 24.



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 \$15 will pay for one person's subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, 700 Bishop Street, Suite 825, Honolulu, HI, 96813.



September 2023

KA PAPA HO'OLĀLĀ

## Reinstating the House Minimum Wage Schedule

CHRISTY MACPHERSON, LEAD COMMUNITY DEVELOPER, HAWAII APPLESEED CENTER FOR LAW & ECONOMIC JUSTICE

It has been a little over a year since Governor Ige signed HB2510 into law, reinstating the House minimum wage schedule of \$18 by 2028. Although flawed due to increasing the tip penalty as well, this bill was nevertheless a significant win for Hawai'i's working families in the area of affordability and fighting the high cost of living. The road to this increase was not an easy one and way too long,

but we ramped up our community engagement and gained support during our 2022 legislative campaign.

Crucially, in 2028, this legislation will put Hawai'i's low-wage workers closer to a true living wage, closing the gap between cost of living and wages by somewhere just shy of 50 percent. It is also projected to generate \$1 billion in additional wages to over 200,000 workers each year, increasing the annual income of minimum wage workers by \$16,400 (Policy in Perspective, [hiappleseed.org](https://hiappleseed.org). 2022). On January 1, 2024, minimum wage workers will experience a \$2 increase in pay to \$14/hr. Mahalo nui to the

Hawai'i Conference UCC for your support of the Living Wage resolution that was approved at the 'Aha Pae'aina back in 2019. There is



still so much more work to be done to ensure that more of our community members don't feel squeezed and forced to move away. Housing that everyone can afford, coupled with a living wage, is critical for a good quality of life here in Hawai'i. There are many opportunities for all of us to connect with one another through our actions and work on these issues in the future.



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