

Statement to the Indiana Kentucky and Heartland Conferences Caucus

Aloha all. Thank you for this time to be in conversation. You need to know, I am geeking out just a little bit as I am a son of Kentucky having grown up in the Elizabethtown area where my family still resides. Presently, I come to you from the ancestral lands of the Hawaiian people. The islands were originally settled in multiple human migration events from Samoa, the Marquesas, Tuamotus, and Tahiti ranging from about 120 CE to about 800 CE all contributing to the Polynesian heritage of the Hawaiian peoples.

I am not here to persuade you to either vote for or vote against A Resolution Encouraging to End 128 Years of War Between the United States of America and the Hawaiian Kingdom. Rather, my goal is to bring you into the fuller dialogue of the Hawaii Conference which this resolution has given rise to. Most everything I bring here can be found on the Hawaii Conference website: hcucc.org. Click on the Apology and Redress page. My remarks are restricted solely to the conversation around the native Hawaiian 'ohana or family table as non-Hawaiian voices tend to muddle this issue. You can find these letters up on our website: hcucc.org, click on the Apology and Redress page. Not all the dialogue is there two people asked we not share their letters on the website and another person declined sharing their response to the letters on line.

Furthermore, I give you full warning as my comments end abruptly as there is no resolution to this ongoing conversation to pass on to you. I urge of you what I urge of the Hawaii Conference delegates: be informed and vote your conscience.

I acknowledge that I am here due to an error in the happenstance of timing that did not allow the Resolution to enjoy a robust dialogue in the Conference, and due to that the Resolution does not enjoy the full support of our Conference members.

Let me explain. At that Fall Association Meeting 2020 of the Association of Evangelical Hawaiian Churches (AHEC, for short), a positive vote was taken to bless the work of a committee within AHEC toward presenting a resolution to this General Synod. That team worked and produced two documents to meet the October deadline: a different resolution than the present one for consideration and a proclamation. Both documents were rejected. However, the group was encouraged to use the proclamation as a model for the present resolution. The submission date for this second document was January.

It was not until February that AHEC met for its Spring. The Resolution was presented at that meeting and a positive vote taken. However, since the Resolution had already been submitted for General Synod acceptance in January, discussion about the content of the Resolution was limited.

While there was a workshop on the Resolution at this year's Aha Pae'aina – our annual meeting, it was not for the purpose of open dialogue and debate. The resolution was never submitted by AHEC to either the Hawaii Conference Council nor the Aha Pae'aina for discussion of its contents. Please note, I am not saying AHEC cannot submit a resolution, for as an association they can, we encourage that of all our Associations. I am saying that while AHEC followed the Resolution Process, from within AHEC membership a concern arose that the Association did not follow the spirit of the Association for appropriate discussion and debate.

Due to this happenstance, the wider discussion of the Resolution is presently taking place in the form of letters from native Hawaiian congregations to the AHEC Resolution Committee. I wish to bring the voices represented in the letters alongside the voices presented in the Resolution.

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THE RESOLUTION

The Resolution itself is built around the framework of International Law which argues 1) the illegal overthrow of the Hawaiian Monarchy was an act of war by the U.S. and its citizens against a sovereign nation and 2) the war is ongoing since a peace treaty was never negotiated nor did the Hawaiian Government capitulate. This Resolution asks the General Minister and President of the UCC to write letters to various Hawaii State government entities, the US government, and the UN encouraging those entities to end the war.

No doubt this is an exceptional argument that moves us into international legal understandings of human rights in a brilliant way. There is also no doubt that the Resolution speaks to the historic and continuing pain and wounds and hurts experienced by the native Hawaiian people. I think you would be very hard press to find any member of the Hawaii Conference who does not affirm that the overthrow of Queen Lili'uokalani was illegal and an act of aggression by self-serving capitalist's interests and not-even-vailed white supremacy. You can find my own statement on the continuing work of addressing white supremacy legacy in our Conference on the Apology and Redress page. These items are not being opposed within the dialogue taking place in the Hawaii Conference.

THE LETTERS

The letters from native Hawaiian Congregations in opposition to this resolution raise a different set of themes. As I noted, not all of these conversations appear on our website as a few people have not given permission for their letters or responses to the letters to be posted. Here are the concerns raised in the letters.

1. The resolution was not appropriately debated by the standards some of the AHEC churches.
2. Some of the historical content of the Resolution is misleading. Two Examples:
 - a. It cannot be proven that Hawaii was the first Christian nation in the Pacific, Tahiti may actually own that claim.
 - b. Footnote 1 of the Resolution indicates that the Papa Makua – the Spiritual Leader of AHEC – is a lineal descendent of Henry 'Opukaha'ia – the Hawaiian who launched the ABCFM endeavor to Hawaii. Henry died childless and left no lineal descendants.
3. Concern that the Resolution does not engage this issue from a faith framework of forgiveness and reconciliation.
4. The Resolution does not move AHEC nor the Hawaii Conference forward in mission and ministry in Hawaii.
5. Lastly, the period of history covered in the resolution does not take into account the work of the 1993 Apology nor the 1996 \$4.5 million Redress, the return to this issue in 2003-2006, and the Reconciliation Team currently at work in the Hawaii Conference. Nor does it mention the ongoing work of the Pua Foundation which was established to address some of the issues of historic trauma.

Thank you for your time and hearing this fuller conversation.