



The Friend

The Oldest Newspaper West Of The Rocky Mountains | Founded 1843 | Volume 39, Issue 2 | May 2023



Land Back: A Way Forward

KRISTEN YOUNG AND JONATHAN ROACH, HCUCC EDITORIAL TEAM

In our scriptures, throughout human history, and especially here in Hawaiʻi, land issues have been tied to great pain and struggle. From the Great Mahele, which was explored in the *Hawaiian Kingdom History: The Kingdom, the Church, the Land* webinar series that was hosted by our Justice and Witness Missional Team, to affordable housing, to rights of indigenous and aboriginal people around the world, and on to the Kahoʻolawe Nine, the Thirty Meter Telescope, Pōhakuloa...land—ʻāina, that which feeds us—is at the heart of so many justice issues here in Hawaiʻi and around our world. The Land Back movement was introduced in 2018 by Arnell Tailfeathers and seeks to reestablish sovereignty with political and economic control of traditional lands.

Land acknowledgements have become popular among organizations and individuals. A land acknowledgement might start, “I live on the land of the _____ people...” While important to acknowledge the land we are on, words without actions often fail to birth transformation, and that failure birthed the land back movement, which has taken many forms and expressions around the world. For this issue of *The Friend*,

we invited people to reflect upon Land Back and offer their responses as a conversation starter.

Core Members of AF3IRM Hawaiʻi write, “Land Back is an assertion of Native rights, sovereignty, and self-determination. It is the assertion that we will be free once more. Although Land Back is native led, the allyship of non-native members of the community is critical to its success. What is important to note is that Land Back must include ending patriarchy — the social, political, and economic system that allowed for the theft of land, people, and culture.” Later they note that, “if Land Back were to be solely about land, we would be replicating the same Western notions of property, ownership, extraction, and dominance that continue to sever our connection to this place and each other.”

When asked to define Land Back, Kyle Kajihiro writes, “I am not Kanaka Maoli. My understanding of the term comes from working with Hawaiians engaged in land struggles. The specific term ‘Land Back’ comes from a campaign by NDN Collective and other Native American groups to recover ancestral lands taken by the United States. The term has spread and become a rallying cry and slogan for many Indigenous peoples seeking to recover stolen lands. In the context of Hawaiʻi, that can refer to specific parcels of land, such as those occupied by the U.S. military, or it can mean the recovery of Hawaiʻi’s national territory as a sovereign country. It means Indigenous people gaining control over land to govern in accordance with their ancestral knowledge, values, and social needs.”

Kajihiro expands his ideas by explaining, “Indigenous peoples will



PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

have greater access to the resources and relations with land that make them who they are. Reversing the tide of cultural genocide requires Indigenous peoples restoring kinship with their lands. I believe that Indigenous governance of land use in accord with their ancestral knowledge will be better for everyone, including the planet as a whole.”

He later adds that “one example of Land Back in Hawaiʻi is the struggle to stop the bombing and win the return of Kahoʻolawe, which is currently held by the State of Hawaiʻi as a trustee for the (re)emerging Hawaiian Nation. This is an unfinished project.”

AF3IRM Hawaiʻi explains that “Land Back means restoration of our life-giving mutual relationships built on care and reciprocity. The Land Back

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PUAHOA HERITAGE FOREST, HAWAII ISLAND
PHOTO: JONATHAN ROACH; USED WITH PERMISSION

God is still speaking

The Friend is published five times a year by:
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Cover Photo Credit: Artwork by Ben Wyatt, a finalist in the UCC Climate Hope Postcards campaign.

God's Good 'Āina

ROBB KOJIMA, PASTOR, WAILUKU UNION CHURCH

In God's hands, creation's initial chaos evolved into something positive, as the land came together and was named good. The difference between "good" and "perfect" is a topic that sparks debate among theologians. "Good" implies the potential for growth and change, while "perfect" suggests something divine that cannot be improved upon. Each piece of land holds a unique history and level of importance in our relationship with it. As temporary inhabitants of this planet hurtling through space, it is our duty to exercise skill mastery in our use of the land. This land is truly a gift.



Wailuku Mission Ground Housing architectural rendering
PHOTO: ROBB KOJIMA, AMA ARCHITECTURE RENDERING USED WITH PERMISSION

'Āina

In today's economy, the traditional model of one church, one congregation, and one sanctuary is no longer sustainable. Insufficient contributions from members due to the rising cost of living jeopardize the church's tithing budget. However, with a holy imagination and the willingness to work together, we can repurpose our buildings to create a new sustainable financial model. What if the three UCC churches in Wailuku—Ka'ahumanu Church, 'Īao UCC, and Wailuku Union Church—

collaborated and shared resources? This collaboration could lead to the discovery of new opportunities and strengthen their bond as a community. It is imperative to consider this option for the survival and growth of the churches in Wailuku.

Recently, our three congregations had a memorable experience when we worked together to plan an entire Sunday of shared activities. We came up with a unique idea of having a "Daylight Savings Sunday" where Ka'ahumanu Church rescheduled their service to 8:30 a.m., 'Īao UCC postponed their service to 10:00 a.m., and Wailuku Union Church

had the option to worship at either location. To make the most of this opportunity, we shared the expense of hosting Chaplain Josh Hayashi as our guest preacher and enjoyed each other's company during the "talk story" potluck lunch that followed. This was our first potluck together after more than three decades. This event is a great example of how our churches can work together and pool their resources, such as preachers, pianists, choirs, and Sunday schools, to strengthen our community bonds and ensure the survival and prosper-

ity of our churches in Wailuku. What we have been learning theologically pushes us to change how we have come to understand what being the church is all about.

We are not planning to merge. Each congregation has its own specific community to serve; however, we are exploring ways to collaborate and enhance each other's efforts rather than replicating them three times.

In a podcast, Professor Rick Watts delved into how Christianity influenced the early world. During certain plagues, people would flee cities, but Christians were known for staying behind to care for those affected, even if they were not family or acquaintances. Barbara Rossing believes in following this example in apocalyptic events, rather than selfishly trying to escape suffering. The example of Christ's incarnation is to come among us, love us, and dwell among us. Currently, we are exercising skilled mastery of our church property in Wailuku to take part in God's work.

Our decision to collaborate and enhance each other's efforts stems from our theological understanding of the church. Wailuku Union Church underwent a transformation in 1998, moving from a chaplaincy model to a missional model of church. Since then, we have been guided by our mission statement and the story of the Good Samaritan, which inspired us to take stewardship of 2.5 acres in Wailuku. Identifying the locals born and raised on Maui who struggle to afford housing for their families as our fallen neighbors, we have been working tirelessly to construct 40 affordable rental units on our land as a gesture of goodwill towards them. In this parable, we will be the Inn Keeper, putting our faith into action.



Colonialized Land

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

To speak of colonialization is to speak of the territories of indigenous people and their nations being taken and settled by non-indigenous people. The rationalization of colonialization of the past 500 years comes from the Doctrine of Discovery. This doctrine evolved from a series of Papal Bulls and edicts beginning in the 1450's concerning Portugal's presence in Africa, with historians highlighting the Papal Bull *Inter Caetera* issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493 concerning Spain's presence in the Americas as the prime example of the doctrine's tenets. The doctrine teaches that any land "discovered" by colonial powers could be claimed as their own. The doctrine

tenets as a political doctrine to justify their treatment (including enslavement and genocide) of indigenous people and the indiscriminate taking of their lands. Eventually, nations formed on those occupied lands further encoded the tenets of the Doctrine of Discovery into laws which address land ownership and the treatment and rights of indigenous people.

While it is easy for us to understand the horror and selfishness of the Doctrine of Discovery from the 15th century, we are less comfortable confronting the biblical precedent for the doctrine. During what is called the Bronze Age Collapse an 'ohana of twelve Semitic tribes colonialized the

they occupied (Gn. 15:16, 18:20-21, Lv. 18:20-30; Dt. 7:3-4, 9:4-5). To simply stare with mouth

agape at the biblical roots of colonialization does not help us to address its legacy, under which so many are weighed down today. As Adrian Maxey of the Dakota Association reminded those gathered for UCC General Synod 29 in 2013: "(T)he native people(s) were never lost and they are not lost now. They were exactly where the Creator put them; therefore, they cannot be discovered. They already know the Creator and the Creator knows them."^{*}

We celebrate the Vatican's repudiation of the doctrine on March 20, 2023 as a clear and unambiguous rejection of the worldview that gave rise to colonialism in both its political and religious expression. During the aforementioned General Synod 29, the United Church of Christ approved the resolution *Calling for the United Church of Christ to Repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery which Authorized the Genocide of Native Peoples and the Theft of Native Lands*. Some twenty years before, the United Church of Christ offered repentance, apology, and redress in connection with the aboriginal Hawaiian population. Still, each generation must take up the work of repudiating this doctrine.

What if our congregations became critical of how the narrative of early Israel is used to promote expansion of dominant cultures? What if there was a courageous review of the history of local congregations and a fearless inventory of personal attitudes?

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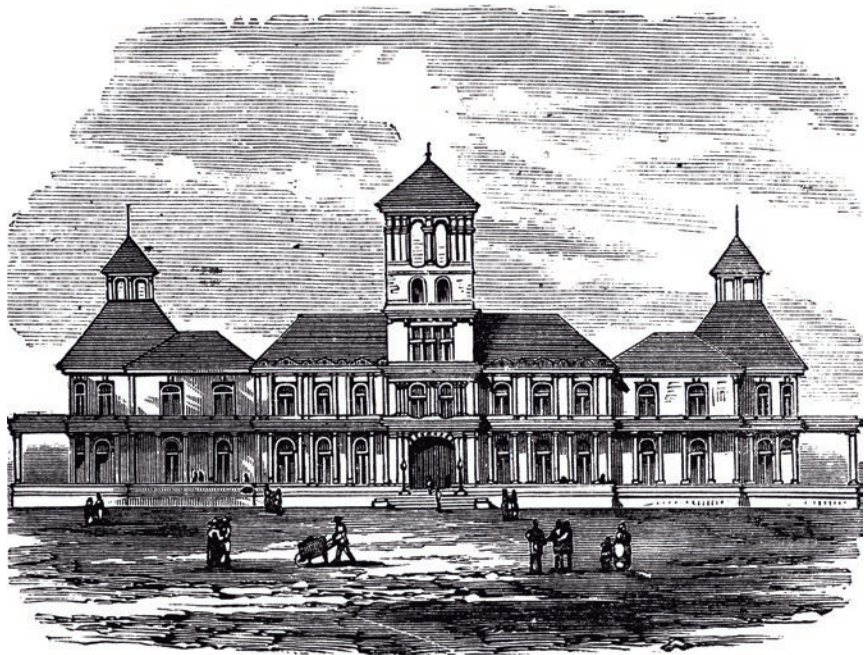


PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

also stated that indigenous people who inhabited those lands and who were not Christian could be subjugated and converted to Christianity. Even though Pope Paul III affirmed "the rights and freedoms of Indigenous Peoples" in his *Sublimis Deus* of 1537, both Catholic and Protestant European powers continued to use those earlier

land of Canaan. There in the narratives of early Israel is the taking of land first settled by others, indiscriminate subjugation, and the plunder of culture, all with religious justification. Just as in our more recent history, so then, indigenous people were considered inferior, made to look bad, and condemned as unworthy of the land

* Elizabeth Leung, *The Doctrine of Discovery: Why it still Matters Today* - United Church of Christ (ucc.org)

An Overview of Hawai'i Conference Foundation Land Holdings

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have noticed that there is a tendency among some to assume that the Hawai'i Conference Foundation (HCF) has a vast land bank that can generate endless resources and opportunities for the Conference. The reality today is not so rosy and is far more complicated.

only about eight percent (8%) of the Foundation's real estate holdings are income-producing properties.

Approximately a third of the properties the Foundation holds (roughly 40 by present count) are held for the benefit of local churches and are used by those local churches

the decades the congregations have faded away and the church has ceased to exist altogether. These properties are mostly small, have gravesites, and no longer have usable structures.

At the Craigsides condominium project, the Foundation holds title to 12 (as of May 1, 2023) fee simple units in Tower III (21 Craigsides), as well as the leased fee interest in 19 units in Towers I and II. In recent years, the 21 Craigsides condominium holdings have been costly, generating negative returns, so the time is right for reinvestment. The Foundation has been selling the 21 Craigsides units (having sold 36 units over the last couple years), and late last year the Foundation also sold its office building at 1848 Nuuanu Avenue, all in order to reinvest proceeds into a better income producing vehicles.

In addition to the paucity of income-producing properties and the general decline in church membership, some other specific challenges confront us. First, we have properties with extensive grave sites, which limit the utility of the property and encumber the Foundation with stewardship obligations (without related income for such support). Second, many properties (including those maintained by our local churches) have become unused or underutilized, so it is incumbent upon us to think of new uses or plans for such properties and facilities. Third, some of the Foundation's properties lie within larger assemblages with "split ownership" where the local church may own a parcel within the church



Kukuihaele Church, Hawai'i Island

Altogether, the Hawai'i Conference Foundation is the owner, lessee, or operator of 115 parcels of land (as measured by tax map key parcels) located on Kaua'i, O'ahu, Moloka'i, Maui, Lāna'i, and Hawai'i. The total acreage is approximately 2,000 acres. The vast majority of HCF's properties are *non-income* producing, including historic church properties, cemeteries, and conservation lands. Therein lies one of the great challenges for the Foundation as an institution, as there is a cost associated with holding these non-income producing properties. Not including the Craigsides condominium project,

for their mission purposes. Through long-standing policy of the Conference and the Foundation, these local churches are expected to take on the maintenance and care of the property they use. Though many of these churches do support and pay for their use of the property, many are having increasing difficulty doing so as church participation declines. When a church using Foundation land cannot pay its bills, the Foundation must step in to absorb the maintenance and occupancy costs. Twenty-two other local church properties held by the Foundation were once thriving churches, but over

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Thanks for the Memories at 1848



... *Land Back: A Way Forward, continued from page 2*

movement is important because it is encompassing of a variety of struggles we face today. From water, to land, to housing, education, and everything in between, Land Back is a call to address all of these problems with Native self-determination as the basis of liberation.”

Examples of programs and projects they would like to see addressed include the “MMNHWGM (Miss-

ing and Murdered Native Hawaiian Women Girls and Māhū). Going back to the truth that it’s not just about land, but people as well, AF3IRM works to address the sexual trafficking and exploitation that occurs in Hawai‘i. Many young Native Hawaiian women, girls, and māhū go missing in Hawai‘i... Maunakea, draining the tanks at Red Hill, and efforts to restore ‘āina are all

connected to Land Back.”

Understanding Land Back can be difficult for those of us conditioned to view land as merely property to be owned but hard conversations are important for us in the church and for our world. We encourage people to do their own research and reflection, ask questions, and most importantly, listen to the wisdom of those who have stewarded the ‘āina from the start.

... *Colonialized Land, continued from page 4*

What if provisions are made for both personal and corporate repentance followed by acts of restoration and covenanting for new ways of relating? What if the church could embrace a theological understanding of God’s universal care as opposed to a provincial God of a particular people? As communities of worship in Hawai‘i, can your congregation incorporate

either the Doxology or the Queen’s Prayer in Hawaiian ‘olelo as a part of your weekly worship service, a reminder of God’s own aloha for the host culture? These are admittedly small steps, but they can be the first in our personal and corporate undertaking to repudiate the vestiges of the Doctrine of Discovery which are still among us.



Kaiwīki Chapel, Hawai‘i Island

... *An Overview of Hawai‘i Conference Foundation Land Holdings, continued from page 5*

campus and the Foundation owns an adjacent parcel, which complicates use and stewardship decisions relating to those properties. Fourth, several of our properties are “land-locked,” having no physical or legal access. Fifth, many properties are subject to use restrictions and reversionary rights, which limit future opportunity for and new use of the property and encumber title. Sixth, with many of our properties, we need to define what is historic (significant, monumental) v. historical (past, old). Understanding and evaluating that distinction will be necessary in order to plan for the future of that property. Finally, some of our properties have developed a unity of identity of church and family. While generations of loyal family members have been good for supporting local churches, it raises problems when later generations begin to conflate church owner-



Piiloa Kanaio Hawaiian Church, Maui

ship with family ownership after the church ceases to be viable.

The Foundation is in the process of undertaking a refreshment of its Land and Facilities Program, as the categorization of properties under that program has not been thoroughly reviewed since 1999. Particularly, there is a current need to identify mission properties and

historic properties that would continue to be held by the Foundation and properties that could be used for income generation (through sale or lease). We also need to incorporate plans to address the concerns described above into our policies. We will appreciate the support and insights of the Conference community as we go through this process.

Meet Our Synod Delegates

Twelve delegates from the Hawai'i Conference will attend the 34th General Synod of the United Church of Christ from June 30 – July 4 in Indianapolis. Typically, the delegates serve for two General Synods on staggered terms. Meet our local church folks who have been selected by their associations to represent our Conference.



Class of 2023:



Heather Barfield
(O'ahu Association; United Church of Christ – Judd Street)



Wendell Davis
(Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches; Papa Makua)



Clyde Fujikawa
(Kaua'i Association; Church of the Pacific)



Linda Kaauiwai – Iwamoto (Kaua'i Association; Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church)



Robb Kojima
(Aha O Na Mokupuni 'O Maui, Moloka'i, A Me Lana'i; Wailuku Union Church)



Kristen Young
(O'ahu Association; United Church of Christ – Judd Street)

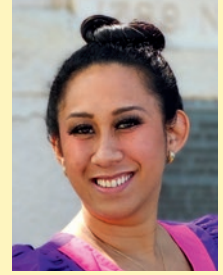


Larry Walter
(Hawai'i Island Association; Committee on Ministry)

Class of 2025:



Kealahou Alika (Aha O Na Mokupuni 'O Maui, Moloka'i, A Me Lana'i; Wailuku Union Church)



Josann Jenks (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches; youth, Kawaiaha'o Church)



Wryen "Keoki" Kiwaha
(At-Large; young adult, Puka'ana Congregational Church)



Greg Sato (O'ahu Association; Central Union Church)



Danielle White
(Hawai'i Island Association; Hilo Coast UCC)



Ben Wyatt of First United Protestant Church in Hilo was recognized as one of several finalists in the national art contest for youth sponsored

by the United Church of Christ's Environmental Justice Ministries. Contestants were asked to draw or paint a picture about climate hope, environmental justice, or protecting the Earth. The winning artwork will

be printed on thousands of Climate Hope postcards, which will be distributed to UCC congregations across the country and then sent to the Congress and the White House asking them to take sufficient action to combat the ongoing climate and environmental justice crises.

Although Ben's art was not selected as the overall winner, he is a winner in our minds and we celebrate his talents and efforts! His artwork appears on the cover of this issue of *The Friend*.

Kristen Young (KY), part of the

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.

HCUCC Editorial Team, interviewed Ben (BW) about his art, his motivation, and his hope for the 'āina and Earth.

KY: Please share a little bit about yourself.

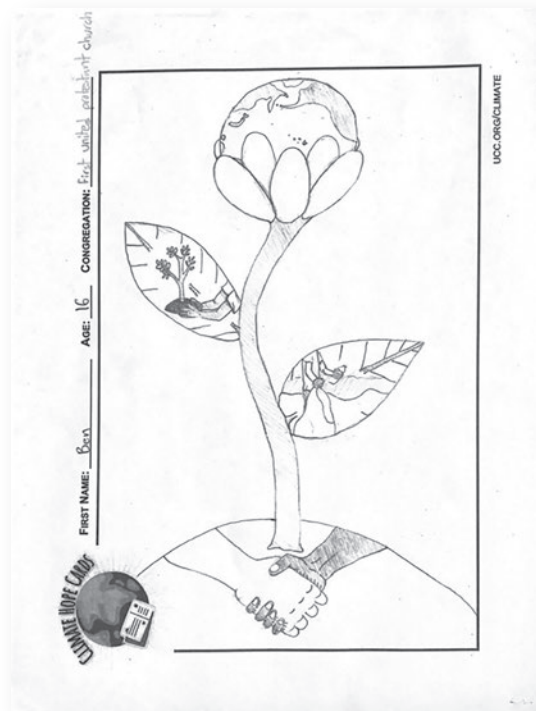
BW: I am Hilo born and raised but currently board at Hawai'i Preparatory Academy (HPA) in Waimea. I like the arts such as ceramics and drawing. I swim for high school and club. And I have recently found an interest in chemistry. I care about our environment deeply. Living in Hawai'i surrounded by nature is wonderful, and knowing that humanity is destroying nature is upsetting.

KY: What inspired/motivated you to enter the contest?

BW: My pastor [Chris Czarnecki] first introduced me to the card contest and I thought it was a good opportunity to practice my art and show my care about the environment.

KY: Explain your drawing and the meaning behind your art. What message did you want to share through your drawing?

BW: I drew a flower growing through collaboration. The leaves show people taking care of the earth in various ways. Lastly the flower itself is the Earth. I wanted to show that the environment cannot be saved by one



person but that everyone needs to work together and take action to protect our planet and keep it clean.

KY: What does the 'āina mean to you as someone who lives on Hawai'i island and as a young person? Why is it important to care about the land?

BW: The 'āina is our home and it's all too often that I see people disrespect it and litter. It's important to care about it if we all plan to keep living comfortably in harmony with the land.

KY: Where did you learn about the importance of caring for the land? Who taught you about caring for the land?

BW: I think caring about the land is just something well ingrained into Hawai'i. Most people living here are able to recognize the importance of sustainability.

KY: What is your hope for the land/Earth?

BW: I hope that someday, hopefully sooner than later, everyone will be able to realize that sustainability is more important than material wealth. And that we as a people can help to restore nature.

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.

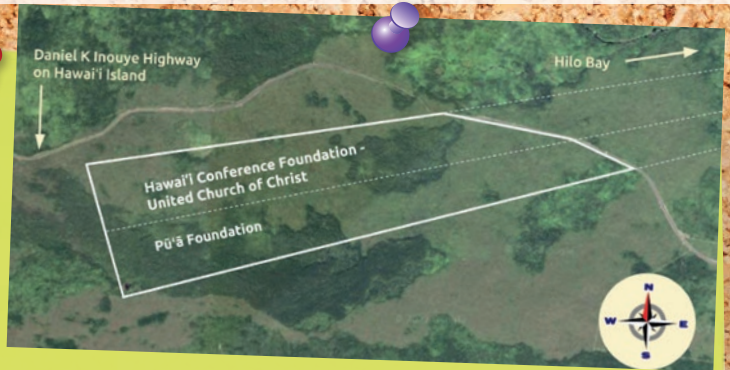
News from our Associations and Affiliates

Punahoa Heritage Forest

TONI BISSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, PŪĀ FOUNDATION

Pūā Foundation was asked by *The Friend* to write briefly about the Punahoa Heritage Forest (PHF). To set context, an understanding of Hawai'i's land system is provided, taken in part from W.D. Alexander's *A Brief History of Land Titles in the Hawaiian Kingdom* (1891) including the description of land by island (mokupuni), districts (moku), and divisions (ahupua'a). In 1846 to organize the lands of Hawai'i a governmental assessment process began. That process was referred to as the Mahele and was handled by the Land Commission. Land commission awards were applied for and assigned as part of the Mahele process.

The concept of the PHF was created and developed by Pūā Foundation to be a place where people and nature thrive. Together with the lands from the UCC Hawai'i Conference Foundation (HCF), PHF is currently made up of 1052 acres from Pūā and 922 acres from the HCF. It forms an elongated shape, and is along Daniel K.



Inouye Highway, a 20-minute drive from Hilo – see above map. PHF is within the mokupuni of Hawai'i, moku of Hilo, and the ahupua'a of Punahoa 2. The land commission award is listed as LCA 387, awarded to the ABCFM in 1855. The claim describes that the King and Ka'ahumanu leased the Punahoa lands to the Sandwich Island Mission in 1827, and the Mission was in peaceable possession from that time to when the claim was filed. The ABCFM is the predecessor of the Hawai'i UCC Conference and Foundation, and as a part of the 1993 apology, redress, and reconciliation initiative for the complicity of the 1893 overthrow of the Hawaiian government, 1300 acres of the Punahoa 2 lands were given to the Pūā Foundation.

The vision for the PHF is for a forest of world-renown that enables Hawaiians to know, care, and connect with their heritage. And the mission is to preserve and protect the natural state of the forest. To help it flourish as a place of gathering, rejuvenation and cultural expression for all Hawaiians and for those who embrace Hawaiian culture. To learn more go to punahoaheritageforest.org.



Ulalia Woodside, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy Hawai'i and Palmyra; Toni Bissen, Executive Director of the Pūā Foundation; Andrew Bunn, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Conference Foundation.

PHOTO: JONATHAN ROACH; USED WITH PERMISSION

Mission Offering: Strengthen the Church

Strengthen the Church (STC), one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ, supports the work of the Hawai'i Conference and the national United Church of Christ to become a multi-racial/multi-cultural church, accessible to all. This offering funds leadership development, youth and young adult ministries, and new and renewing congregations.

Churches are invited to receive this offering on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 2023, but contributions may be collected on any Sunday.

Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at uccresources.com.



Conference News and Highlights

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

Local Church News



Waiola Church in Lahaina, Maui, celebrates 200 years of mission in 2023! This historic church, formerly known as Waine'e Church,

was founded in 1823 by Sacred High Chiefess Keōpūolani.

Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu is celebrating its Centennial Anniversary this May. Established



in 1923 by a diverse group of high school students, Church of the Crossroads was Hawai'i's first intentionally interracial congregation. Today, they are a Just Peace, Open and Affirming, and Greening congregation.

On Sunday, April 23, 2023, member of **Wananalua Congregational Church** in Hāna, Maui, voted



unanimously to become an Open and Affirming (ONA) church in the United Church of Christ. This church will be the eighth ONA church in the Hawai'i Conference, the second on Maui, and the first in East Maui.

Pastoral Transitions

Amy Butler has been called to serve as Interim Minister of Community Church of Honolulu. Amy's first Sunday was February 12, 2023. She grew up on O'ahu and graduated from Hawai'i Baptist Academy (HBA) before moving to the continent to attend college. She has a Master of Divinity and a doctorate in preaching.



Cara Ann Maeda has been called to serve as Designated Term Pastor with Hilo Coast United Church of Christ in Honomu on Hawai'i



Island. Her first Sunday in ministry there was on March 5, 2023. Cara, her husband Kevin, and their three children are happy to be back in the

Conference Calendar of Events

MAY 29

Memorial Day (Office Closed)

JUNE 9

AHEC 'Aha Nā Kai 'Ewalu

JUNE 12

Kamehameha Day (Office Closed)

JUNE 15

SCHCC Annual Business Meeting (Virtual)

JUNE 16 - 17

'Aha Makua (Virtual)

JUNE 19

Juneteenth Holiday (Office Closed)

JUNE 30 - JULY 4

34th General Synod in Indianapolis, IN

JULY 4

Independence Day (Office Closed)

islands after living in San Diego for many years, where she worked at Point Loma Nazarene University as an adjunct professor. She is a current Member in Discernment with the O'ahu Association of the Hawai'i Conference UCC.



In Memory

Elden Buck, 91, retired ordained minister and longtime teaching missionary

to the islands of Micronesia, died in Honolulu on February 13, 2023. In 1958, Elden and his wife Alice were commissioned by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and assigned to Kosrae in the East Caroline Islands, with their two young daughters. The family relocated to the Marshall Islands in 1962, serving on the tiny island of Ebeye in the Kwajalein Atoll. Elden later served

as the Protestant Chaplain on the U.S. Army's Kwajalein Missile Range for 13 years. In 1981, Elden and his family moved to Hawai'i, where he served as Senior Pastor of the Korean Christian Church (UCC) in Honolulu. In 1990, he accepted a call to serve as pastor to the First United Protestant Church of Hilo, where he lived until his retirement in 1997.

Eldon is survived by his three children, Lisa (Stephen) Haley, Lauren Buck Medeiros, and Kyle (Maries) Buck; eight grandchildren; and numerous great grandchildren.

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.

May 2023

KA PAPA HO'OLĀLĀ

Church in Hilo to Be Part of Two Denominations

ERIC ANDERSON, CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS UCC IN HILO

In February of 2009, the Hilo congregation of the United Church of Christ of Pohnpei (UCCP) worshiped for the first time. This May the church was welcomed into the UCC (USA) with dual standing by the Hawai'i Island Association (HIA). UCCP worships at Church of the Holy Cross, which has supported the Pohnpeian church's request to join the UCC (USA).

The church has served a growing population of Pohnpeians. Many have been students at the University of Hawai'i's Hilo campus. Youth and children's ministries have been a major focus of the congregation. Those programs are a must, says pastor Bensis Henry, to further their education.

The UCCP of Hilo, is "a story of faith and perseverance." On the day of its formal inception in September

2009, with no less than four senior UCCP dignitaries present, Hawai'i experienced a tsunami warning. They went ahead with the service and established the church.

A member of the Micronesian Pastor Committee, Henry has served on the Micronesian Ministry Committee of the Hawai'i Conference since its revival in 2018. He serves on the Board of Directors of the new One Stop Center for Micronesians on Hawai'i Island, which has just begun providing assistance to immigrants from those island nations. He hopes that the new relationship with the UCC (USA) will provide training opportunities for himself and other church leaders as well as support for finding a church building of their own.

Valuing the ties with the home



Senry and Bensis Henry, Eric Anderson

denomination, leaders consulted with UCCP officials during the process of seeking UCC (USA) standing. The church's primary ecclesiastical relationship will continue to be with the UCCP and will follow that communion's practices for selecting pastors.

HIA looks forward to developing and deepening its relationship with the UCCP of Hilo, its members, its leaders, and UCCP members everywhere.

Eric S. Anderson is pastor of the Church of the Holy Cross UCC in Hilo and a member of the HIA's Committee on Ministry.