

Associate Conference Minister Is Ready to Work with Churches

Donald Schmidt joined the Hawai'i Conference staff as an Associate Conference Minister on January 2, 2014. His responsibilities include working with the Stewardship Missional Team and Kaua'i Association. He will also share in the work of the Formation Missional Team and the O'ahu Association.



"I am excited to work with churches that are really trying to live God's aloha and be welcoming and loving," said Donald. "In a world that is so fear-oriented, working with churches that offer a different witness of 'no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here' is very exciting, and I look forward to helping churches find new ways to live out that ministry."

Donald, who was ordained in the United Methodist Church, has been a United Church of Christ minister since 1997. He is a graduate of United Theological College (M.Div.) and Wisdom University (D.Min.), and most recently served as Pastor of Admiral Congregational Church in Seattle, Washington.

Prior to that, Donald served churches in Hawai'i, including Waiola and Ka Hana O Ke Akua. His past experience in Hawai'i includes serving as Conference Moderator and member of the Conference Board of Directors, AHEC Board of Directors, Tri-Isle Association Church and Ministry Committee, and Henry Opukaha'ia Center for Pacific Theological Studies.

Donald is a musician, composer, writer and editor whose works have appeared in books, international and ecumenical journals, and Sunday school curricula. He and his husband, Don, returned to Hawai'i in late December. They have six adult children and nine grandchildren.

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Pension Boards Offers Benefits to Clergy and Lay Employees

Michael A. Downs, President and CEO of the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ (PBUCC), met with UCC clergy and lay employees at Central Union Church on January 11 to explain the services and programs available to church employees.

An affiliated ministry of the UCC, the PBUCC is the seventh largest denominational pension plan in the country. Through the \$3.4 billion in assets that it manages, PBUCC offers pension, disability, health, dental, death, and survivor benefits to UCC clergy and lay employees and their families.



Michael Downs shares information with clergy and lay employees at a workshop at Central Union Church on January 11.

"Each one of those dollars has somebody's name on it," said Michael. "We touch and support 40,000 belly buttons worldwide, meaning our members and their spouses and children. We cut about 140,000 checks each year."

The most well-known benefit offered by the PBUCC is its retirement plan, which boast the lowest fees of fifty Christian denominational plans nationwide. In addition to the employer account that churches offer their clergy and lay employees, individual employees can open a tax-sheltered annuity (TSA) with monthly contributions of as little as \$25.

Illustrating the importance of opening a TSA, Michael told the story of Jackie Parker, a Pension Boards employee. When Jackie retired after 41 years, she said, 'I'm retiring today a wealthy woman.'

"What ended up happening over the years is her TSA account eventually equaled her employer account," added Michael.

A second option for retirement planning is opening a retirement savings account (RSA), which can be consolidated with TSAs,

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The Making of a Minister

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Several years ago, a small church called someone as its pastor. Because he was not ordained, the Church and Ministry Committee, which carries responsibility for authorizing persons to be ministers, was asked to license him. That is, he would be temporarily authorized to serve that particular church's needs.



The Church and Ministry Committee held grave reservations about him from the start. The only "formal" education he had was a series of courses offered by various pastors in the community. In conversation with me, he claimed that his real education had been the many hours spent listening to sermons and talk shows on Christian radio stations.

Clearly he was ill-prepared, but the committee could not convince the church of the same. Like many small-membership churches with budget too meager to hire an ordained minister, they believed he was a "gift from God." The committee reluctantly licensed him, the church happily received him, and the Association obligingly installed him.

Then things started unraveling. He demanded more pay. He made decisions on his own. He preached long sermons, thick with dogma and strong on shame. He accused people of blocking his ideas and plans. The breaking point came when he insisted that he should control the church's finances and the congregation should leave the UCC. Members finally voted to dismiss him, but not before he had done considerable damage.

We would likely agree that church ministry cannot be taught over the radio. It might surprise us, however, to realize that ministry can't be taught in the classroom either. Yet many churches that are small in size, unable to afford an ordained minister, and wanting desperately to avoid a scenario like the preceding, plead just that: courses to train ministers.

Here in Hawai'i, as in other conferences, such courses have been offered and the results are mixed. My own observation, as someone who has planned for and taught classes like these, both one-off and short-term, is that they are inadequate in training persons for ministry. They simply cannot provide what ministers need to flourish in the parish.

I believe the most effective model is the one Jesus used to prepare his disciples for ministry. That model of discipleship suggests at least two things that are needed in the making of a minister: intentional community and guided experience. Let me explain what these are and how we are now incorporating these into the training of United Church of Christ ministers.

Intentional Community: Jesus did not schedule weekend classes to accommodate his busy students. He called them out from their vocations and created an intentional community where real learning would occur. This is why a seminary education will continue to be the recommended and normative path for ministerial training. Not only does a seminary offer the depth and breadth of courses beyond what we can offer locally, but it also creates an intentional community where the frequent interaction and critical discussion make for real, impactful learning.

Church ministry cannot be taught over the radio....Ministry can't be taught in the classroom either.

Even as seminaries turn to on-line courses and web-based degree programs, the on-line and off-line discussion that is usually required creates a similar intentional learning community. For candidates who for good reasons cannot attend seminary, either in residence or on-line, Church and Ministry Committees are always looking at ways to form such intentional learning communities, including peer or clergy groups and mentoring.

Guided Experience: Jesus sent his disciples out to practice ministry—and then debriefed and critiqued their experiences. Seminary offers the guided experience through hands-on work such as practicum, field work, or internship.

For those who cannot attend seminary, Church and Ministry Committees are looking to mentors—usually ordained ministers with some experience or special skills—who can guide candidates and licensed ministers as they do actual ministry in a church setting. The goal of the mentoring process is to help the candidate attain proficiency in certain prescribed marks, that is, skills or characteristics, that are expected of all good and competent ministers.

To be sure, there are other things that go into the making of a minister, many of which are inward, spiritual and intangible. But intentional community and guided experience are outward building blocks upon which a solid foundation for church ministry can be built.



God is still speaking

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Workshops Help Church Leaders Improve Ministries

The 2014 Church Leaders Event, to be held on February 22, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Nu'uuanu Congregational Church in Honolulu, promises to be a valuable opportunity for churches to improve their ministries.



The annual Church Leaders Event offers many opportunities for learning and fellowship.

Gordon Gilles, President and CEO of Cornerstone Fund, will be among three national United Church of Christ staff leading workshops for local church leaders. He will be joined by Patrick Duggan, Executive Director of the Church Building and Loan Fund, and Mike Schuenemeyer, Minister for Health and Wholeness Advocacy. All three will be available to visit and consult with churches during their time in Hawai'i.

Gordon will lead two workshops, "Small Churches with Small Budgets Facing Needed Repairs and Maintenance" and "Investing from the Heart, Building for the Future." The latter workshop will offer an overview of the investment and loan opportunities available through Cornerstone Fund. The other workshop will directly address a common situation for churches here in Hawai'i.

"I am specifically tailoring this workshop [to the Hawai'i Conference] because of the number of churches with small properties in need of repairs," said Gordon. "A lot of times the challenges are so overwhelming that they don't know what to do—they either do nothing or look for someone else to do it for them. We will look at churches doing together what they can't do alone."

Patrick's workshop, "The Nexus of Money & Mission: UCC Church Building and Loan Fund," will outline the programs and services offered by the Church Building and Loan Fund, which is dedicated to assisting new and renewing congregations with buying, building, renovating, or refinancing a church building or land site. Church leaders interested in capital campaign services are also encouraged to attend.

Mike's workshop, "How the Church Can Lead the Way: Ending the HIV Epidemic in Asia and the Pacific," will discuss the current state of HIV in Hawai'i. He will present a comprehensive model for defeating HIV developed by the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with and

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Register for Clergy Retreat on Hawai'i Island

The Hawai'i Island Association will again sponsor the Hawai'i Conference Clergy Retreat to be held March 31 to April 2 at the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel. All Conference clergy are invited to attend the retreat, which will offer a workshop on Psalms and preaching and another on boundary training.

Facilitating the workshops and delivering the keynote address will be retired Northern California-Nevada Conference Minister, Mary Susan Gast, and Co-Regional Minister and President of the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Don Dewey.

In her workshop, "Put an Unshakeable Spirit within Me," Mary Susan will engage clergy with the Psalms and consider how to recast them in language conducive to modern worshippers. Participants will explore who we speak for, who we speak to, and how we might move toward what Walter Brueggemann calls "new, dangerous, [and] imaginative possibilities." Clergy are asked to bring their Bible and sense of adventure.

Mary Susan has been a hospital chaplain, a university campus minister, a local church pastor, and an Associate Conference Minister. Her liturgical materials and commentaries on church life and contemporary culture have been widely published.



The annual Clergy Retreat is a good opportunity for clergy to gather, worship and learn.

A second track that will be offered is a boundary training session facilitated by Don. This workshop satisfies the requirement for boundary training in the Hawai'i Conference and the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church.

Don received a BA in Christian Education and Religious Studies from Northwest Christian College and his Masters of Divinity in Theology and Art from Pacific School of Religion. Don has served churches in California and Kansas and has been a keynote speaker for various camps, retreats, and events within the denomination.

To guarantee registration for the 2014 Clergy Retreat, registration forms (which have been mailed to all clergy and are available online at www.hcucc.org) and fees must be received at the Hawai'i Conference office before 4 p.m. on February 28.

Cost is \$65 per person, which includes materials and some meals. Late registrations are subject to a \$25 fee and accepted on a space-available basis. Airfare and hotel are not included, although a group discount rate for lodging is available for those staying at the Courtyard hotel. The retreat will begin at 1 p.m. on March 31 and conclude at noon on April 2. Visit <http://ezregister.com/events/8720> for more information or to register online.

Pension Boards Workshop Provides Helpful Information to Church Employees

Michael Downs, President & CEO of the UCC Pension Boards, held a workshop at Central Union Church on Saturday, January 11, to discuss the services they have available to UCC lay and clergy employees. Thirty-six people from thirteen churches attended the workshop. See story on page 1 to learn more.



Members in Discernment Gather, Find Support



The O'ahu Association hosted nine of its Members in Discernment, or candidates for ministry, for lunch at the Conference Office on December 8, 2013. Their mentors and pastors joined members of the Church and Ministry Committee to offer support and encouragement, and to hear reflections of their journey over the past year.

Plan for Lent with UCC Resources

The United Church of Christ offers a number of resources to assist worship planners throughout the Lenten season.

Calmly Plotting: 2014 Lent Devotionals, from the Stillspeaking Writers' Group, offers a fresh perspective on the season for every day of Lent. Each devotion in this 60-page booklet contains a scripture verse and prayer for reflection. A



second resource, *Essential Lent: Holy Moments and Sacred Experiences for Your Whole Congregation*, provides interesting, easy-to-prepare activities and worship resources designed for everyone

in your congregation. For a limited time, UCC Resources is offering a bundled package of these two resources for \$15 with free shipping.

Readers seeking to connect prayer and other inner spiritual practices with outward actions of mercy and compassion will find plenty of ideas in *A World Worth Saving: Lenten and Spiritual Practices for Action*. This six-week study written by George Donigian incorporates well-known hymn texts as it guides participants to pray about daily news reports, discover the needs of the world, and then respond with love and compassion. The book can be ordered online for \$13.49.

For more information about these and other resources for Lent and Easter, visit www.hcucc.org for a link to the UCC website.

Churches Invited to Observe Kalaupapa Sunday



Hawai'i Conference youth and leaders pose for a picture overlooking the Kalaupapa peninsula.

Delegates to last year's 'Aha Pae'aina approved the resolution to designate the last Sunday in January as Kalaupapa Sunday to recognize those who were exiled to the remote peninsula.

While many churches held Kalaupapa Sunday observances on January 26, the Justice and Witness Missional Team encourages other churches to do this on any Sunday in the year.

Resources for Kalaupapa Sunday, as well as the 'Aha Pae'aina resolution, are available on the Conference website at www.hcucc.org.

resource List

Live Out Mission Through OGHS Offering

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) is one of four special mission offerings of the UCC, bringing God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries. To people in need, OGHS is a promise of a better future.



Right now OGHS dollars are bringing long-term relief to Hurricane Katrina victims in New Orleans; making available clean water and food for impoverished families; and providing health care, education, small business micro-credit, and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. OGHS also supports domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

The suggested OGHS offering date is Sunday, March 30, 2014. However, churches may choose to receive this offering at any time during the year. Resources for promoting this offering are available at www.ucc.org/oghs.

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.

Philippine Recovery Effort Shifts from Relief to Reconstruction

Written by Anthony Moujaes

Visiting the Philippines recently, Xiaoling Zhu, Area Executive for East Asia and Pacific of Global Ministries, witnessed firsthand the destructive power of the typhoon that battered the island nation. But as he worshipped with Filipino churches (see photo below), he also witnessed their resolve to reclaim and rebuild their land with the help of international aid.

The recovery process has been slow, Xiaoling explained, with some parts still without electricity. Organizations in the Philippines have outlined a plan for the coming months



and years it will take to rebuild the country. They plan to begin the recovery period in February.

“Disaster relief starts when CNN

is on the ground, but it continues through the relationships that are built with our partners there [the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, the ACT Alliance and Church World Services],” said Mary Schaller Blaufuss, Executive for UCC Volunteer Ministries.

Typhoon Haiyan made landfall on November 8. After immediately sending initial aid from One Great Hour of Sharing, UCC Disaster Ministries issued a \$250,000 appeal for emergency relief and generous donations followed, surpassing the appeal goal in just weeks. UCC members, congregations and conferences have donated \$563,161 to support those displaced by the disaster.

Congress Urged to Reject New Sanctions on Iran

Written by Anthony Moujaes

The once tenuous political relationship between the United States and Iran is taking a slight turn for the better as Iran begins complying with an international agreement to reduce nuclear production.

But United Church of Christ advocates for peace in the Middle East are urging members of Congress to pull back on their proposed sanctions and allow for a diplomatic solution that would lead to improved relations and a chance for peace.

The UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries and Global Ministries are two of 62 interfaith organizations that sent a letter to Congress in January.

“As a church, we are very concerned about peace in the Middle East due to longstanding mission relationships and partnerships there,” said Peter Makari, Global Ministries Area Executive for the Middle East and Europe. “The diplomatic path towards peace with Iran, for Syria, and for Israel/Palestine is far preferable to other approaches.”

Congress' recent introduction of legislation to impose new sanctions on Iran should current negotiations fail is short-sighted and dangerous, said Mike Neuroth, UCC Advocate for International Policy.

New sanctions could even be interpreted as a hostile act, risking conflict and further destabilizing the region at a time when the U.S. has pulled back its presence from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Detroit Filmmaker Wins UCC Video Contest

Written by Connie N. Larkman

Rashad Jackson, a member of Fellowship UCC in Detroit, Michigan, is the winner of the United Church of Christ video contest, “My Faith, My World, My Voice.” His video, “Awake, Alive, Aware,” came out on top, collecting the largest number of the 4,500 votes cast. The 25 year old plans to use his \$5,000 prize to continue filmmaking.

The UCC contest asked young adults ages 18 to 35 to visually answer the question, “How does my faith transform, connect, or touch the world?” It generated more than two dozen entries, from which three finalists were selected. Finalist videos were posted on the UCC video contest website for public voting during the week of January 13. Visit www.ucc.org/videocontest to view Rashad's video.

Physicist and UCC Member Linked Science and Religion

Written by Anthony Moujaes

Ian Barbour, a noted physics scholar and member of the United Church of Christ, is being remembered for his tremendous impact in bringing together science and religion. He died December 24 in Minneapolis at the age of 90. He was a member of First United Church of Christ in Northfield, Minnesota.

Ian bridged two schools of thought previously considered incompatible. He believed that science and religion should be in a constant, constructive dialogue with each other rather than act as opposing or unrelated forces. His contribution to the discussion was so significant that his death was reported by national and international publications including the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Huffington Post* and *Sydney (Australia) Morning Herald*.

Embracing Ian's concept, the UCC is preparing for a second Science, Faith and Technology Sunday on February 16.

In Memory: Judith “Judy” Slaughter

Retired minister **Judy Slaughter** died November 30, 2013, at the age of 65. Ordained in 1990, Judy served churches in Southern California before becoming minister at Makawao Union Church. Memorial service was held Saturday, December 28, 2013, at Makawao Union Church. Condolences may be sent to her husband, Charles “Jay,” 364 Nalani Street, Makawao, HI 96768.



(Pension Boards, continued from page 1)

401(k) and other pre-tax accounts, making it easy to track investments. Money may be withdrawn or deposited into the account, and one hundred percent of the payoff is available as clergy housing allowance.

“This is an extraordinary benefit for clergy,” Michael said. “You don’t need to annuitize. You may even want to set up this account for long-term care if something happens to you. I try to encourage this whenever I can.”

Factoring in social security benefits, the PBUCC works to replace at least 85 percent of employees’ income when they are retired. The biggest concern that can prevent this is when an employee outlives his or her income, said Michael, as about 2,000 PBUCC retirees are over age 85, and 24 are over one hundred years old.

Other benefits available to clergy and lay employees in Hawai‘i are the Life Insurance and Disability Income Plan, which, for one-and-a-half percent of a person’s salary, provides a death benefit, life insurance, and short- and long-term disability benefits; and the Annuitant Visitor Program, which supports 8,000 retired UCC clergy annually with in-home visits and advice.

In its 100 years of service, despite two world wars, the Great Depression, and multiple minor recessions, the PBUCC has not missed a pension payment, said Michael. Year after year the organization has beaten its benchmarks and is prepared for future economic downturns.

“The biggest challenge moving forward is the number of churches getting smaller and older and therefore with less capacity to provide benefits to their employees,” said Michael. “The system may not be able to fund things in the same way.”

Clergy and lay employees are encouraged to explore the benefits and money management opportunities at their disposal through the PBUCC. For more information about the PBUCC, its benefits, and programs, visit www.pbucc.org.

(Church Leaders Event Preview, continued from page 3)

Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+), called SAVE. This model has been endorsed by various ecumenical groups and was featured at the 2013 International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

With eleven different workshops to choose from, participants will learn about topics including legal issues, insurance matters, church finances, worship planning, and other issues affecting churches. Local church moderators, treasurers, committee chairs, youth leaders, and other church leaders are encouraged not to miss this opportunity to network, learn, and fellowship.

To register for the 2014 Church Leaders Event, visit www.ezregister.com/events/8697 or mail in the forms sent to churches. Deadline to register is February 10.



Highlights from the Website

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



Tri-Isle Association Installs Ministers

Napua McShane Burke was installed as Pastor and Teacher of the Topside Moloka‘i churches—Ho‘olehua, Kalaiakamanu Hou, Kalua‘aha, and Waialua Churches—on Saturday, January 11, 2014, at Kalaiakamanu Hou Congregational Church in Kaunakakai.

Enoch Stephen was installed as Japanese Language Minister of Kahului Union Church on Sunday, January 12, 2014.



Pastoral Changes

Retired Minister **Choo Lak Yeow** began as Interim Minister of Ewa Community Church on December 15, 2013.

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.



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February 2014

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

February 17	President's Day (Office Closed)
February 22	Church Leaders Event
February 26	Stewardship Missional Team
March 1	Open and Affirming Workshop
March 5	Administration Missional Team
March 26	Prince Kuhio Day (Office Closed)
March 31-April 2	Clergy Retreat
April 5	Conference Council
April 17-18	Maundy Thursday/Good Friday Office Closed
April 20	Easter Sunday

Pension Boards Provides Valuable Benefits

Below are just a few of the many benefits offered by the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ. To learn more, visit www.pbucc.org.

- PBucc benefits are available to all UCC clergy and lay employees.
- Quarterly statements are mailed to all account holders.
- PBucc retirement plans have the lowest fees of the 50 denominational plans nationwide.
- PBucc is secure. It has not missed an annuity payment in its 100-year history.
- Tax-Sheltered Annuities may be opened for as little as \$25 per month.
- Accounts are fast and easy to set up.
- PBucc is one of the largest denominational pension plans in the U.S.
- PBucc's customer call center is located in the United States.
- Retired clergy are afforded housing allowances with Retirement Savings Accounts.