

Central Union Hosts 194th 'Aha

Welcome to the 194th 'Aha Pae'aina, hosted by the largest church in the Hawai'i Conference (1,232 members) and thirty-second largest in the United Church of Christ.

"We are excited to host the 'Aha and be able to share in the covenantal work of our sister churches to continue God's mission in Hawai'i," said Central Union Church pastor David Rivers.

Established in 1887, Central Union Church traces its roots to whalers docking at Honolulu Harbor. A need for Christian ministry among dissolute seamen prompted the creation of Seamen's Bethel, which later merged with Fort Street Church to form Central Union Church.



Throughout its history, the church has been a renowned center of Christianity in Hawai'i. Its pastors and congregations have planted new churches and dispatched missionaries worldwide.

"A huge legacy that our church celebrates is not just being centered on itself, but helping the whole community," David said.

Central Union Church continues that legacy today by operating a 180-student preschool and an adult day care center, as well as sharing its facilities with a Pohnpeian congregation, the Alzheimer's Association, Boy Scouts of America, Alcoholics Anonymous and numerous other non-profits.

In the past sixty years, Central Union Church has hosted the 'Aha Pae'aina seven times, most recently in 2005.

Situated on over eight acres of landscaped campus, Central Union Church is referred to as the "Church in a Garden." The Hawai'i Conference is grateful for the opportunity to sow seeds of unity among churches within this garden of faith.

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Workshops Offer Partnership Possibilities

Each year a variety of workshops are offered at the 'Aha Pae'aina. On Friday, a lineup of learning opportunities will build on the theme, "Called as Partners."

Keynote speaker Min Heui Cheon will lead a workshop highlighting partnership opportunities between churches in the Hawai'i Conference and the South Seoul Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). Joining her will be South Seoul Presbytery members who will speak about their churches and interest in partnership.

A workshop with UCC ecumenical officer Karen Georgia Thompson will explore the UCC's interdenominational relationships as well as partnerships that other conferences have.

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Micronesian Churches Highlight Youth Work

The concern of youth about social and environmental issues was a prominent theme at a recent meeting of Micronesian and Marshallese churches in Majuro, capital of the Republic of the Marshall Islands.



Delegates from the congregational churches of Pohnpei, Kosrae and the Marshalls, along with observers from the United Church of Christ (USA), gathered for the General Assembly of

the Micronesian Council United Church of Christ (MCUCC). Chuuk, also a member, was for the first time not represented at this biennial gathering.

Youth delegates said that drug use, drinking and suicide were on the rise among young people, and that youth are discussing these issues in church more openly than before. Concerns about the environment are also on the minds of youth, especially issues of global warming, sea level rise and sustainability. Marshallese youth from the host church in Uliga decided to take action by using the general assembly as an example of holding a "responsible conference," or reducing or eliminating the use of foam cups, styrofoam plates and plastic utensils.

(continued on page 2)

Toward Deeper Caring

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Why get involved in other countries' issues?

That was a question raised by some delegates at last year's General Synod while considering a resolution calling for peace and reconciliation between North and South Korea.



This year's 'Aha Pae'aina keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Min Heui Cheon, was a resource person at Synod on the resolution, and she explained that this is not merely a "Korean issue." It started with a war involving the U.S., Soviet Union and China following years of Japanese occupation, and it continues today with the North Korean threat of sending nuclear bombs on missiles that can reach Japan, Hawai'i and the U.S. continent. A message, she said, from the church in the U.S. would both encourage Koreans and show them that Americans and U.S. churches care about others in the world.

Synod delegates, deeply moved, passed the resolution.

The gospel offers a message of hope, life and salvation. Our mission is to proclaim that message throughout the world, and this world extends beyond ourselves, our church walls and even our national borders. Our mission, indeed, is to care about others, and there are many today who need caring among migrants, refugees, the poor and oppressed.

But the church in the U.S. seems to resist that call, and it may be, in part, that as churches and churchgoing decline, we are inclined to hunker down, cut back on mission, and protect what little we have left.

In this tension we hear the clear call of Christ, which is not focused on church itself, whether it be building or institution, but directs us "to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal," that is, to bring hope, life, and salvation to all people (Luke 9:2).

Partners like the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea remind us that what is truly important is found beyond church walls and national borders, and community partners who will lead our afternoon workshops will suggest ways that we can act on that. I pray that their witness moves us toward the deeper caring that is the very lifeblood of the church of Jesus Christ.

(Micronesian Churches, continued from page 1)

Enja Enos, Marshallese church president and MCUCC moderator, reminded delegates that missionaries from Hawai'i brought the gospel to the islands beginning in 1852. Because of that history and the large number of MCUCC churches in Hawai'i and the U.S. continent, the Hawai'i Conference and UCC are mission partners with the MCUCC and participate as consultants in general assemblies. Attending this year were Zach Wolgemuth, UCC Executive for Disaster Ministries, and Hawai'i Conference Minister Charles Buck.


Charles led morning Bible studies and engaged delegates in conversation on how the church does God's work through miracles and the power of love. Zach discussed his work with disaster ministries, and delegates discussed issues of disaster preparedness and response in their respective islands.

MCUCC delegates were warmly welcomed by members of Laura, Rita and Uliga churches, the three Marshallese UCC churches on Majuro. But the welcome seemed especially warm after a heavy downpour on the first day of the general assembly flooded roads but also completely filled water catchment systems and the Majuro reservoir and virtually wiped out the severe drought that had plagued the island. Marshallese hosts were convinced that MCUCC delegates had brought the rain with them and that God was blessing the meeting and the churches!

(Workshops, continued from page 1)

For churches sharing facilities with other congregations, a workshop led by First United Protestant Church members Nixon Jack, Bob Ohia and Debbie Sasan will focus on the benefits, strategies and challenges arising from these partnerships.

Also slated are workshops exploring local church partnership opportunities with non-profits. Participants will learn about facilitating end-of-life care conversations from Jeannette Kojane of Kōkua Mau; addressing homelessness with Institute for Human Services chaplain Terry Ogawa; transitioning homeless families to sustainable independence with Mary Saunders of Family Promise; building homes and hope with Honolulu Habitat for Humanity's Jim Murphy; and doing social justice with interfaith communities with Linda Petrucelli, Hilo Coast UCC pastor and president of Interfaith Communities in Action.



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God is still speaking

Associations Gather for Spring Meetings



The five Associations gathered for worship, business, and fellowship. Pictured clockwise from above: Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches met February 19-20, at Ko'olauhui'ia Protestant Church; Hawai'i Island Association met on April 16 at Church of the Holy Cross; Tri-Isle Association met May 14 at Wailuku Union Church; Kaua'i Association met April 29-30 at Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church; and O'ahu Association met May 7 at Makiki Christian Church.



Churches Play Role in Disaster Recovery

After disaster strikes, churches often play an active role in response and recovery. Zach Wolgemuth, Executive for UCC Disaster Ministries, provided resources and best practices to clergy and lay leaders during a workshop at the Hawai'i Conference Office on May 10.



Zach Wolgemuth, Executive for UCC Disaster Ministries

"Every congregation can and should be involved in long-term recovery," said Zach. "But how we respond to disasters is just as important as the support we provide."

Stressing the importance of building relationships with relief organizations prior to a disaster, Zach said that response and recovery training is insufficient without those connections. Communities with strong relationships recover well and quickly.

Because disaster assistance can only be accessed through a particular sequence of delivery, understanding the protocol is imperative for churches to help people. For instance, once a federal emergency has been declared, temporary housing and loans from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) cannot be received until organizations provide immediate relief.

"If there is one thing I want you to take away from this, it is to understand this process," Zach said. "There are many

organizations and resources out there, and you don't have to do it all."

Equally important for churches and individuals is disaster preparedness. By having the proper riders in your insurance policy and emergency supplies in place, for example, your congregation can become part of the recovery rather than the problem.

Recovery typically does not start until six months after a disaster strikes, said Zach.



Because few organizations provide long-term relief, UCC Disaster Ministries helps fill this critical gap.

UCC Disaster Ministries provides support and resources to conferences and congregations, and trains long-term volunteers to be deployed as needed. It offers a safety net for people with unmet needs after insurance and FEMA funds have been exhausted.

"Long-term recovery is where it is most important for your congregation to be involved," Zach said. "If your community has been impacted, they need UCC representation."

Summarizing effective disaster relief, Zach quoted an African proverb: "If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

For more information about UCC Disaster Ministries, as well as resources for disaster preparedness, response and recovery, visit www.ucc.org/disaster or email Zach at wolgemuthz@ucc.org.



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June 2016 'Aha Pae'aina Edition

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

- June 8-11 'Aha Pae'aina
- June 13 Kamehameha Day Observed (Office Closed)
- July 4 Independence Day (Office Closed)
- July 30 State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board
- August 6 Conference Council and Foundation Trustees
- August 19 Statehood Day Observed (Office Closed)
- September 5 Labor Day (Office Closed)
- September 25 Community-Wide Worship with John Dorhauer
- September 26-28 Clergy Retreat



Highlights from the Website

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

Pastoral Transitions

Anne Findlay-Chamberlain resigned as Senior Pastor of Manoa Valley Church. On May 29, the congregation bid farewell to Anne and husband Rod, who will be relocating to Charlotte, North Carolina.

John Hoover retired as Pastor of Hokuloa United Church of Christ after 42 years of ministry in Hawai'i, California and New York. His last Sunday was May 29.

Conference Office Transitions

Ann Hiyane, Controller for the Hawai'i Conference and Hawai'i Conference Foundation, resigned on March 29, to take a new opportunity with the State of Hawai'i.

Ngu Castro joined the Hawai'i Conference Office staff on April 18 as Controller of the Hawai'i Conference and Hawai'i Conference Foundation. She is a CPA who worked most recently for a non-profit agency in Honolulu.