

Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches

'Aha Iki

October 2020 (please note this is the same report as to the Fall Halawai as no significant changes have occurred in the two weeks between meetings).

Rev. Dr. David K. Popham

I give thanks to God for the work of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and its support and empowerment of native Hawaiian United Church of Christ congregations. This bicentennial year of the arrival of the first company of Christian missionaries has thrown light on theirs and the countless Hawaiians who partnership in God's mission on these islands.

Hau'ula Church United Church of Christ

Hau'ula Church United Church of Christ (HCUCC) was a dwindling church that asked the Conference office for help in transitioning the church property into a ministry hub for the Hau'ula community. Rev. Sage Chee was recruited by the Hawaii Conference Foundation and approved by the surviving members of the congregation to lead this effort. Another church entity – Hau'ula Kahuku Church (HKC) – was invited to start services on the sight without permission of the surviving members but with permission of the AHEC Committee on Ministry. A lawsuit was engaged to determine who has primary rights to the property.

Sage Chee shares the story of an attempt to meet with the AHEC Board of Directors. He related how he and some of the members of Hau'ula Congregation waited for three hours to meet with the Board only to find out that the Board had ended the meeting without giving this group a voice at the table.

Andy Bunn sums up the an attempt at legal mediation:

“A formal mediation process with HCF, AHEC, and Ms. Kamai-Kaaihue before a mutually appointed mediator took place on June 29, 2020, at Kaumakapili Church. The process took place over the course of the entire day and involved extensive written briefing for the mediator in advance. Though we believed we were close to a settlement, the mediation ultimately failed. HCF reduced the negotiated settlement terms from the mediation to a written settlement offer, a copy of which was shared with the Bhau

oard members, so that Ms. Kamai-Kaaihue and AHEC could take time to consider the proposal. The proposed settlement (1) called for an acknowledgment of HCF ownership; (2) permitting the use of the property by Hau'ula Kahuka Church on a non-exclusive basis to be shared with Hau'ula Congregational Church; (3) provided a venue and path for the development of the Hau'ula Kahuku Church as a new church recognized in the UCC (including training and licensing for Ms. Kamai-Kaaihue as a pastor); (4) called for AHEC to assume the roll of fostering and managing the relationship between both its member churches (Hau'ula Kahuku Church and

Hau'ula Congregational Church); (5) provided funds to address the housing concerns of Ms. Kamai-Kaaihue (to be administered by AHEC); and (6) required the property to be vacated in order to limit potentially significant liability to all involved arising from the current unpermitted use of the property as a homeless encampment. This offer was, again, rejected. A further attempt to settle was made through the direct intervention of the First Circuit Court's settlement judge on July 28th in a conference call with legal counsel and principals, but no settlement was reached."

At the beginning of August, the judge presiding over the property title case, ruled on a series of summary judgements in favor of the HCF as the title holder to the property. At the time of the writing of this report the HCF and the HCUCC still understand this issue to be in active litigation due to some residual issues yet to be definitively ruled on by the judge.

Papa Makua

At the 2019 Aha Iki votes were taken in the affirmative to restore the position of Papa Makua to the HCUCC office staff. This vote was taken with the assumption that 1) monies were available to support the position and 2) the position is a Conference position.

Upon arrival in mid-September of 2019 I was invited to meet with the Papa Makua committee convened by the AHEC Board of Directors. I pledged I would keep the issue of the Papa Makua on the radar of the HCUCC Council.

In the meantime I discovered that 1) monies to fund the position do not exist, and 2) the role of a Papa Makua while in the AHEC by-laws, never occurs in the HCUCC by-laws or in its structure as a position unto itself. The Papa Makua was always tied to an existing Associate Conference Minister position, but not a sperate position outside of "duties" assigned to an Associate Conference Minister. This does not mean that people did not serve admirably as the Papa Makua and AHEC did not benefit from such a position. It is to note how historically this position was handled within the system.

Seeking to address both the financial sustainability of the position and to firmly place the position in the auspices of the AHEC Board of Directors a proposal was offered up in late 2019. This proposal was discussed by the AHEC Board in December 2019. By the following HCUCC Council meeting in February 2020, with the AHEC Executive Committee in March 2020, the April 2020 meeting of HCUCC Council, and the May 2020 meeting of the AHEC Board of Directors. The proposal was abandoned in May 2020.

At this time, we await a new HCUCC Council which will appoint an adhoc committee to be in conversation with the Papa Makua Committee of AHEC. In the meantime, I am proposing that a capital campaign be conducted by the Conference that will in part fund the Papa Makua position. Until further discussions can be held and finances strengthened movement forward on this issue is unfortunately slow.

Personally, I recognize Wendell Davis as the Papa Makua of AHEC. He and I meet monthly in his role as Papa Makua to discuss common concerns and support of AHEC congregations and

ministers. I have expressed my hope to Wendell that with the new HCUCC Council the position of Papa Makua can be added to the structure of the Council.

Historical Lands Held in Trust by the Hawai'i Conference Foundation

Andy Bunn, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Conference Foundation and our comptroller Corinne Murashige are reviewing all land holdings that the HCF is entrusted with. From this review we are beginning to get an understanding of what lands are historical lands (usually with an historical building and/or grave yard), legacy lands (lands given for the purpose of monetizing to support the mission of the Conference), and trust lands held (some held in trust for the Conference and some held in trust for other entities such as the local church or a family).

From conversations about this review, Andy and I began to realize that the historical lands have not been kept to a standard that indicates the value of the land as historical heritage for the state residents in general nor for the native Hawaiian population particularly. Of concern is the upkeep of historical buildings and the maintenance of graveyards. A financial analysis for the upkeep of these properties indicate the HCF needs an additional endowment of ten million dollars in order to create a revenue stream to cover the cost of maintenance. Conversations around a capital campaign to include this concern plus other financial needs of the Conference (see Papa Makua above) are underway with both the HCF Board of Trustees and the HCUCC Council.