

'Aha Pae'aina Meets in History-Rich Kona

This week the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ gathers for the 191st time footsteps away from where the first missionaries arrived to these islands in early April 1820.

Delegates and visitors will worship together, hear keynote addresses, participate in workshops, conduct the business of the Conference and share meals and community around the table.

The churches of Kona enjoy a rich history, beginning with Mokuaikaua Church where delegates and visitors will gather for the opening worship and plenary session on Friday morning.

This first church in the Hawaiian Islands houses a model of the Brig Thaddeus, the ship that brought the Pioneer Company of the Sandwich Islands Mission to Kona, thus beginning the first chapter in the long history of Christianity in Hawai'i.



The first missionaries to Hawai'i arrived in 1820. This famous picture reminds us of what they must have experienced their first months here.

Just "down the road" is another landmark—the burial place of Henry Opukahai'a. As a young boy Henry hid away on a ship bound for the East Coast. After arriving in New England he befriended some students from Yale, was introduced to Christianity and eventually was baptized. He then begged his friends to come with him to Hawai'i to bring Christianity to his people. Although he became ill and died before he could return home, he was influential in convincing those first missionaries to make the long journey to the Sandwich Islands.

Among other legendary names from this part of the islands are Asa Thurston, first minister of Mokuaikaua Church, and Lorenzo Lyons, who wrote the words for well-known Hawaiian hymns such as "Hawai'i Aloha" and "Hosana Nui Ia Iesu."

The 'Aha Pae'aina last met in Kona in 1997. Mahalo to the Hawai'i Island Association for hosting delegates and visitors of the Hawai'i Conference again this year.

General Synod Considers Resolutions

United Church of Christ delegates will consider fifteen resolutions later this month at the denomination's biennial gathering, this year in Long Beach, California. Among the resolutions are divestment from fossil fuel companies, repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery, and recognition of the need for compassionate care for United States veterans.

Fossil Fuel Divestment

As part of a worldwide effort to combat climate change, this resolution urges all entities of the United Church of Christ, including individual members and UCC affiliates, to fully divest from fossil fuel companies.

The resolution cites divestment as a powerful instrument for corporate change and calls upon all Covenanted, Affiliated and Associated Ministries, Agencies, Conferences, Associations, Local Churches and members of the UCC to "ensure that within five years none of its directly held or commingled assets include holdings of either public equities or corporate bonds in fossil fuel companies." It also urges UCC entities to immediately cease any new investment in these companies.



An important part of General Synod business is the consideration of resolutions. Pictured above are delegates to General Synod 28 in Tampa, Florida, in 2011.

Because unchecked carbon dioxide emissions have resulted in the worst drought since the Dust Bowl, severe polar ice cap depletion and billions of dollars in weather-related disasters, the resolution proposes divestment from fossil fuel companies as an investment in a just and sustainable earth.

Doctrine of Discovery Repudiation

Synod delegates will also discuss the Doctrine of Discovery, by which Christian leaders claimed a God-given right to take control of all lands and to justify wars of conquest, colonization and slavery. If adopted, the United Church of Christ will join

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Of Elephants and God

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

You can't miss seeing an elephant. Unless you're looking in the forest.

Apparently, elephants, as big as they are, are not easy to spot in a forest. The problem, according to a Kenyan biologist interviewed for a National Public Radio story, is that elephants "move around a lot and tend to hide."

So how do you find an elephant in the forest?

With twine tied around their waists, she and other scientists, part of an effort to protect the species, would walk through the forest in a straight line. "It didn't matter whether there was a river, a ravine, stinging nettles, buffalo, whatever. You just kept going."

They were not counting elephants, but slicing up the forest into samples and looking for their evidence. That is, they were searching for poop!

It was so exciting because here were these huge animals—a lot of times you would walk through the forest, you didn't see them....You knew they were there. Sometimes the dung was steaming! You knew that the elephant that dropped that poop was not very far (Gregory Warner, "To Count Elephants In The Forest, Watch Where You Step," National Public Radio, May 11, 2013).



Finding elephants in the forest reminds me of church meetings. There's the irony of coming together as God's people, in God's name, and for God's purposes, and yet, in the end, after all the discussion, votes and business, feeling like God was somehow missing. As immense as God is, it is easy to lose sight of God in the midst of our discerning and deciding.

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Unlike elephants, God, I am sure, does not intentionally hide. But like elephants, there is evidence that God is there. The challenge for church people in church meetings is to look constantly for the signs of God in the things we do, the words we say, the people we meet, and the events that happen. And the more we pick up the signs of God, the more we sense the presence of God.

As we gather for this 'Aha Pae'aina, as well as at General Synod later this month and in our church meetings through the year, I pray that we will make the effort to sense the fullness of God's presence, and then to respond in such a way that by our words and deeds others can't help but notice the evidence of God all around.

Meet the General Synod Delegates

Twelve delegates, two from each of the five Associations and two Associate Delegates, will represent the Hawai'i Conference at General Synod 29 to be held June 28-July 2 in Long Beach, California. In the last two issues of The Friend we introduced you to the ten delegates. The article below introduces you to the two associate delegates. Associate delegates are delegates by virtue of the office they hold: Chair of the Conference Council and Conference Minister.



Roberta Jahrling (Conference Council Chair) will attend General Synod for the second time as an associate delegate. In addition to chairing the Conference Council, Roberta is a member of the Hawai'i Conference Foundation's Board of Trustees and its Property Management and Investment Committees. Outside of the Conference, Roberta attends Kaumakapili Church, serves as treasurer for the Pu'a Foundation, and is a member of the Retirement Housing Foundation Advisory Commission.

"It will be nice to renew friendships with our Hawai'i delegates from the last Synod and look forward to meeting the new delegates to this year's team," she said. "A stroll through the exhibit hall will

be a must just to experience the various offerings from groups associated with the UCC and the arts and craft booths with their tempting goods for sale."

Charles Buck (Conference Minister) has attended a number of General Synods as delegate, associate delegate and staff.

"What I most appreciate about Synod is how UCC people from all over, nationally and internationally, can come together, welcome each other as if long friends, and then leave with new friends!" said Charles. "Many go back to their homes re-inspired and re-energized to serve their churches and communities," he said.

Charles said he is looking forward to Y@GS, or the Youth at General Synod program. "Youth not only get who we are as the UCC, but they are also helping to shape and define who we are becoming—all in God's image!"



The Friend is published eight times a year by the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ, 1848 Nu'uano Avenue, Honolulu, HI 96817.

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Faces Around the Conference

Smiles Abound throughout Spring Gatherings of the Five Associations



Over the past few months all five of the Associations of the Hawai'i Conference have gathered for worship, to conduct business, and to be in community with one another. Pictured clockwise from above: O'ahu Association met on May 11 at Waipahu UCC; Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches met at its 'Aha Halawai on February 22-23 at Kalihi and Moanalua Church; Tri-Isle Association met April 27 at Keawala'i Congregational Church; Hawai'i Island Association met on April 27 at Ho'olokahi Congregational Church; and Kaua'i Association met on May 3-4 at Koloa Union Church.





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June 2013 'Aha Pae'aina Edition

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

- June 5-8 191st 'Aha Pae'aina
- June 11 Kamehameha Day (Office Closed)
- June 15 Forum with Allan Boesak at Keawala'i Church
- June 18 Clergy meeting with Allan Boesak, Honolulu
- June 28- July 2 General Synod 29, Long Beach
- July 4 Independence Day (Office Closed)
- July 16 Planned Giving Workshop

(Synod Resolutions, continued from page 1)

the Episcopal Church and the Council of Bishops of the United Methodist Church who have formally denounced the Doctrine.

Part of the resolution calls for the UCC to collaborate with ecumenical partners to explore ways to compensate American Indians for lands that were and are still being stolen. The resolution also requests that Justice Witness Ministries and the Council for American Indian Ministry prepare educational materials for churches. It also calls upon the United States government to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery, which remains law to this day and has affected several Supreme Court decisions in recent decades.

Compassionate Care for Veterans

The resolution to "recognize the need for compassionate care and healing to our veterans" asks the United Church of Christ to implement a ministry to help military veterans reintegrate fully into society and provide services for their families.

Since 1775 the United States has engaged in 35 armed conflicts, averaging no more than seven years of peace between each conflict. Because service members are brothers and sisters, parents, neighbors, students, employees and friends, the resolution encourages churches to engage in grassroots awareness and reach out to local Veterans Administration, Veterans Service Commission and Veterans Courts to offer assistance.

Visit with Credit Union Representatives

Representatives from the United Methodist Credit Union are attending this year's 'Aha Pae'aina. A new relationship between the Hawaii'i Conference and the credit union means that churches and members, especially new immigrant groups with no established banking relationship, will have access to several types of accounts, loans and other benefits. Take time to visit with these representatives or contact Sherman Hee at 791-5638 or neighbor island toll free at 1-800-734-7610, ext. 638, for more information.