

The Friend



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Asian-American Theologian to Give Keynote Address at 'Aha Pae'aina

Rita Nakashima Brock has lectured in Australia, New Zealand, England, Germany, Denmark, Hong Kong, Japan, the Philippines, Canada, and across the United States, but this June will be her first time in Hawai'i when she will deliver the keynote address at the 192nd 'Aha Pae'aina.



A world-renowned theologian and scholar, Rita is the founding Co-Director of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School and founding Co-Director of Faith Voices for the Common Good, an organization dedicated to educating the public about the values and concerns of religious leaders and organizations.

Her first book, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power*, won the Crossroads/Continuum Publishing Company award for the most outstanding manuscript in women's studies in 1988. She has since written several other books including her latest, *Soul Repair: Recovering from Moral Injury after War*, co-authored with Gabriella Lettini in 2012.

Rita is a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and has served on its General Board and Administrative Committees. She was the first chair of the Common Global Ministries Board, created in 1996 to be a common witness of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ. In 1993, she represented the National Council of Churches on an ecumenical delegation to Guatemala and El Salvador to support peacemaking in both countries.

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Leaders Event Gives Information to Churches Seeking Loans

During the February Church Leaders Event, executives from two financial ministries of the United Church of Christ provided valuable information to workshop participants. Gordon Gilles, President and CEO of the Cornerstone Fund, and Patrick Duggan, Executive Director of Church Building and Loan Fund (CB&LF), shared this information in separate workshops. (See the article on page 3 for more information on the difference between these two financial ministries.)



In the workshop, "Small Churches/Small Budgets," Gordon explored ways that small churches can take care of maintenance issues.

Not putting off maintenance was a key theme of the workshop. It is almost always cheaper to take care of maintenance problems now rather than later, he said. He explained that a church may not think that it qualifies for a

loan, but often it can. Cornerstone also provides revolving lines of credit to help churches with maintenance projects.

A question raised at the workshop was why the Hawai'i Conference Foundation is not responsible for maintaining a church property for which it holds title. Gordon's answer was short and quick: "If you use it, you are responsible for it."

In a second workshop, "Investing from the Heart, Building for the Future," Gordon provided a detailed summary of the loan and investment services offered by Cornerstone. Most banks require churches seeking real estate loans to have a minimum of three hundred members and borrow at least \$1 million, which precludes most churches in the UCC, said Gordon. Fortunately, for established UCC churches, Cornerstone specializes in making low-cost loans for the purpose of renovation, remodeling, construction, or refinancing an existing debt.

Gordon said Cornerstone will typically lend a maximum of fifty percent of a church's property value, offering adjustable and fixed rate loans ranging from five to thirty years. In most states, including Hawai'i, it costs nothing up front to borrow up to \$350,000. In 18 years, he said, Cornerstone has never had a default or a repossession, an impressive record considering that Cornerstone deals exclusively with churches, most with less than a hundred members.

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Jesus Sightings

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Making sense of death challenges even adults. Imagine, then, how confusing it would be for a young teen as it was for me, a thirteen year old, watching my father die of pancreatic cancer.

For a very long six months, we witnessed this giant of a man wither away to skin and bones, suffering excruciating pain. In those months of suffering and in the weeks after he died, I remember it to be a very strange time when no day ever felt normal. I had no clue what to expect, how to grieve, or where to turn for help in understanding what I was feeling.



I have seen Jesus many times through people like Pastor Bob who live out Jesus' commandment to love one another.

Then confirmation classes started at church. To be honest, I was in no mood to go every Friday afternoon for a whole year. But my mother, trying to restore some sense of normalcy in our lives, made me go. I resisted, but Mom was adamant. It turned out to be just what I needed.

One Friday after confirmation was over, I was waiting for Mom to pick me up. Because everyone else had left already, Pastor Bob kept me company. As we waited there on the hilltop where our church was situated, we talked about this and that. Then he asked me how things were going after my father's death. I'm not certain what I said—probably nothing really deep or emotional. But looking back, I am absolutely certain that at that moment I was seeing Jesus.

To be sure, Pastor Bob was not Jesus. Rather, I saw Jesus in his simple question, motivated by concern and posed without pressure. His genuine interest and compassion—shown to me that day and long afterwards—brought Jesus alive to me. Out of the mist of my confusion came Jesus to stand with me in clear and quiet assurance.

Since that experience, I have seen Jesus many times through people like Pastor Bob who live out Jesus' commandment to love one another. These glimpses of Jesus, or "Jesus sightings," are the times when I witnessed the very essence and message of Jesus coming alive through gracious acts of humanity.

I consider Jesus sightings like these to be the very purpose of the church. Even though many books have been written, workshops offered and sermons preached on the church's purpose, and even though I resist simplistic understanding, I truly believe it is as basic as making Jesus real and visible. The church exists to incarnate Jesus through the sharing of God's love with neighbor. Every time a soul is touched, a need met, or a life transformed, much as mine was on the hilltop, it is a Jesus sighting.

The church exists to incarnate Jesus through the sharing of God's love with neighbor.

But Jesus sightings become rare when the focus turns from the ministry of God's love. It is not difficult for the church to find itself becoming more attentive to programs rather than people; to building structures rather than to building relationships; or to condemning those we disagree with than to listen for what God may be speaking through them. When this happens, there is no need for Jesus because there is less concern for what people need and what God offers them.

Jesus himself was tempted, three times, to turn from the mission to which God had called him. But it is revealing that the last time, on a "very high mountain" from which could be seen "all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor," Jesus saw even more clearly the focus of his ministry: "Away with you Satan, for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only God'" (Matthew 4:8-10).

The season of Lent that will soon end is often a time of personal reflection. But it should also be a corporate reflection for the church to examine its worship and mission. Is God the object of its worship and is the love for people the focus of its mission? Is Jesus readily seen by both the long-time member and the one-time visitor?

In a world where people will always be in need of the love of God, there will always be opportunities for Jesus sightings.



God is still speaking

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(Loan Information, continued from page 1)

No loan points and no need for an appraisal are just some of the benefits of a Cornerstone loan. However, said Gordon, it is important for churches to remember that a loan should not exceed 50% of the value of the property and that Cornerstone will not loan more than the equivalent of \$2,000 per member.

Operating much like a bank, Cornerstone is able to raise money for loans by offering interest-bearing investments. Any person or affiliated UCC entity may invest, enjoying competitive return rates on the products they offer. Churches wanting more information can go to www.cornerstonefund.org or call 888-UCC-FUND (888-822-3863).

Patrick Duggan, Executive Director of the UCC Church Building & Loan Fund, said that Hawai'i is among its most active regions



and his organization continues to seek new loan partners. During his workshop, "The Nexus of Money and Mission," he detailed the mission and services of CB&LF for prospective client churches. This ministry assists congregations younger than thirty years, as

well as renewing congregations of any age, with purchasing a church building or land site. It also provides loans for building, refinancing, or renovating a building or facility.

"Younger than 30," he said includes both new congregations and a church of any age that recently joined the UCC. A renewing congregation can be of any age, but must enter a formal renewal process with CB&LF.

With \$57 million in assets and a \$22 million lending capacity, CB&LF will typically loan up to \$2.5 million and no less than \$75,000. There are no closing fees, and interest rates, he stressed, are always below-market.

Being approved for a loan, however, is an intricate process which begins with the church completing a detailed application. CB&LF staff reviews not just a church's finances, but the overall health of the church when making loan decisions. This includes participation in the church's respective Conference and/or Association and contributions to Our Church's Wider Mission.

CB&LF also offers capital campaign services to help churches repay a loan. Most campaigns are thirteen to fifteen weeks in duration, and training and resources are provided. "The rule of thumb is that a church can raise about three times what it receives in paid pledges in the course of any operating year, but any church can do more than that," said Priscilla Bizer, Capital Fundraising Executive, who co-led the workshop.

For more information about the services and programs of CB&LF, visit www.ucc.org/cblf/.

Financial Ministries Provide Unique Services

Church Building & Loan Fund (CB&LF) and Cornerstone Fund, two financial ministries of the United Church of Christ, offer excellent financing opportunities for churches.

Dedicated to assisting new and renewing congregations, CB&LF provides loans for the purchase, construction, or renovation of church buildings and facilities. It also assists with financing land site purchases and environmental upgrades, and offers capital campaign services to help churches repay their debt.

CB&LF works with churches established less than thirty years ago or those that have recently joined the UCC. It also assists congregations of any age that are seeking to be a renewing congregation and have entered into a formal renewal process with CB&LF.

For established churches seeking to maintain or expand existing facilities, Cornerstone Fund makes low-cost loans for a variety of projects, including capital improvements, accessibility, repairs, elevators, steeples, and educational wings.

Working much like a bank, Cornerstone is able to provide loans to churches by offering interest-bearing investments to churches and individuals. Any person or organization affiliated with the UCC may invest with Cornerstone, earning attractive returns on college savings, Individual Retirement Accounts, endowments, cemetery funds, and more. Investing with Cornerstone allows churches to meet financial goals while supporting the wider mission of the church.

(Theologian to Give Keynote, continued from page 1)

Rita has taught at a number of colleges and universities across the U.S. She holds the Bachelor of Arts degree in Religion from Chapman University, a Masters of Religion in Practical Theology from the School of Theology at Claremont, and was the first Asian American woman in the U.S. to receive her Masters of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in the Philosophy of Religion and Theology from Claremont Graduate School.

The 'Aha week will begin with the 'Aha Iki, the gathering of Hawaiian churches, to be held June 3-5 at Kalihi and Moanalua Church. The theme, "Stop, Look and Listen," was chosen to complement the focus this year: celebrating the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches.

The 'Aha Pae'aina culminates with the 'Aha Makua, to be held June 6-7 at First Chinese Church of Christ. The theme, "Bind Us Together," is a reminder of how we are bound together in Christ for ministry throughout the wider church and world.

Details and registration information for the 'Aha Pae'aina will be mailed to churches and posted online later this month.

Faces around the Conference

The Friend

Record Turnout of Leaders Finds Support and Resources at Church Leaders Event



Churches Invited to Address HIV Epidemic in Their Communities

"If you are living with HIV stand up."

When Mike Schuenemeyer, UCC Minister for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, invited workshop participants to stand during the Church Leaders Event on February 22, no one did.

His next question prompted a different response.

"Does anyone know of someone with HIV?" With this question, most of the people in the room stood up.

"HIV doesn't just affect the person living with HIV, but affects family, friends, loved ones and anyone in the community," said Mike.



Recognizing this is important because it enforces the idea of solidarity. Whether or not one has diabetes, everyone is affected by it because it is part of our culture and we know people who have it, he added.

Mike attended the International AIDS Conference and visited China, Taiwan, and Korea in order to hear what is happening in Asia around the AIDS epidemic. He is also a member of the HIV Strategy Group of the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, a project initiated by the World Council of Churches.

The goal of his workshop was to help participants consider a conversation on HIV in their churches that may lead to a decision to respond to the HIV epidemic in the community. (See sidebar at right for tips on engaging your congregation in difficult conversations.)

According to workshop participants, a Biblical mandate to care for the sick, the example of Jesus, personal experiences and relationships, and the overarching theme of justice are just a few of the reasons churches should respond to the HIV epidemic.

Mike said that if a church chooses to respond, it is important for the congregation to examine its own mission and purpose as well as understand how the issue affects the community.

Mike said there are 35 to 42 million people living with HIV, and it exists in every place in the world with three-quarters of the cases being in Africa. There are 4.7 million people living with HIV in Asia and the Pacific, and 4,300 total cases have been diagnosed in Hawai'i since the epidemic began. There are also available statistics to help members understand exactly how the virus is being transmitted in their own community.

"If you know that injection drug use is a significant way HIV is being transmitted in your community, you may want to focus on that in addressing HIV," said Mike.

There are many resources in the community and in the UCC that churches can use to address specific issues related to the HIV epidemic. Visit www.ucc.org/health/hiv aids for more information.

Tips on Holding Difficult Conversations

Important conversations in our churches can be scary and difficult. Mike Schuenemeyer offered participants in his Church Leaders Event workshop some tools for engaging in those conversations.

Because of the stigma attached to HIV, it is one of those difficult conversations for people to have, he said. Health in general is stigmatized in our culture to the point that people will go to another community to visit the doctor so no one else is aware of their medical problem.

"When you complicate that with other factors like HIV being sexually transmitted, it stigmatizes it even more," said Mike. "I have found that when we are able to create safe space where we identify our shared values it is easier to talk about it."

When churches choose to talk about a difficult issue such as HIV, participants need to be aware of some important group dynamics such as allowing space for everyone to speak so one person does not dominate the conversation, agreeing to confidentiality, speaking with "I" statements, honoring the intent of what a person is trying to say and owning the impact of one's own words.

"You've heard of the Golden Rule? I have another I call the Platinum Rule: 'Do unto others as they would have done unto themselves,'" said Mike.

resource List

UCC Offers Worship Resources for Holy Week

Planning for Holy Week and Easter is made easier with worship resources from the United Church of Christ.

A variety of hymn and song suggestions, taken from the *New Century Hymnal* and *Sing! Prayer and Praise*, will help pastors draw inspiration from traditional and contemporary musical sources and can be found at www.ucc.org/music-arts/hymns-suggestions.html.

The Worship Ways web page, www.ucc.org/worship/worship-ways/, is updated with liturgies for the Sundays of Lent and Easter.

A third resource, available from Global Ministries, the shared witness of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), offers reflections, poems, and photos from missionaries and mission partners. It can be found at globalministries.org/resources/special-days/easter/.

Bookmark these pages for updates and new resources as they become available.

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.

UCC Leaders Collaborate on Common Priorities

Written by Anthony Moujaes

Leaders of the United Church of Christ from around the country are confident they have strengthened their relationship and common vision to lead the church into a bold, new future together. The four national officers of the denomination and Conference Ministers from the thirty-eight conferences met February 24-26 in Orlando, Florida, to outline financial, governance and covenantal priorities going forward.

Geoffrey A. Black, UCC General Minister and President, and Kent Siladi, Connecticut Conference Minister and chair of the Council of Conference Ministers (CCM), shared highlights of the meeting in a two-page public letter.

Though they didn't "solve" all the issues of the church that demand attention, the CCM and national leaders believe progress was made. Among the many subjects discussed during the retreat were pressing financial issues facing the national setting of the denomination, committing to the Big Inspirational Goals (BIGs) of the UCC as the inspiration of their work, and seeking ways to enhance their collective relationship while maintaining the UCC's polity of autonomy.

The letter cites an affirmation of the four BIGs, which were shared with the wider church during General Synod 2013. The four bold inspirational goals are a bold, public voice; reachable and welcoming congregations; engaged discipleship; and excellent and diverse leadership.

The officers and CCM also spent time examining conference boundaries as called for by a General Synod resolution, strengthening their communication and relationships with each other as leaders and across the church, and reflecting on the changes to governance. UCC polity allows each setting of the church—congregations, associations, conferences and the national setting—to act independently, but those gathered at the retreat recognize their interactions are interdependent.

"We believe that we made progress during our time together," Geoffrey and Kent wrote. "We prayed, met, engaged each other in authentic dialogue, and made specific commitments to addressing the challenges we face in our time."

Fast for Families Bus Tour Makes Its Way Across America

Written by Emily Schappacher

Fast for Families Across America is a 66-day bus tour that aims to send a strong message about the critical need for immigration reform. The initiative is a follow up to the nation's powerful response to "Fast for Families: A Call for Immigration Reform," a thirty-day event in late 2013 that gathered hundreds of people in a tent on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to support five core immigration advocates who fasted for change.

Phase I of Fast for Families Across America took place January 29 through late February, when fasters and activists from churches across the UCC stopped in 67 key congressional districts throughout the country to lobby for immigration reform.



Madison Shockley speaks at the Fast for Families Across America rally February 26 in Vista, California.

Phase II began February 24 when two buses departed from Los Angeles with plans to stop in nearly 70 cities throughout the U.S. before ending the journey in Washington, D.C., on April 9.

"Our hopes in supporting the tour is to keep the pressure on Congress and not let them think the public does not care about this issue," said Madison Shockley, Pastor of Pilgrim UCC in Carlsbad, California. "Every day we don't have immigration reform, families are being broken up and people are dying in the desert. We can't put this off."

Franklinton Center Connects Students with Literacy Immersion

Written by Emily Schappacher

For the past six years, students from Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, have spent their spring breaks at Franklinton Center at Bricks in Whitakers, North Carolina, serving and learning in various ways. This year is no different as seven students returned to the UCC-affiliated conference and retreat center from March 9 to 14 for a service trip in which they instilled the importance of reading to children ages 5 to 11 during Franklinton Center's Literacy Immersion Experience.

"Young people are looking for something that is a good use of their time and energy, and I think that pulling people together in faith-based groups to work on concrete needs allows them to have the best kind of religious experience," said Beth O'Malley, Hood College's Dean of the Chapel and an ordained UCC minister. "The kind in which we are motivated to do good work in the world and get back together to talk about what we did, why we did it, and what we need to do next."

The Literacy Immersion Experience is an extension of Franklinton Center's ongoing Literacy Project, which supports students, families, and schools through activities proven to help improve literacy skills and support speaking, listening, thinking, and learning in creative ways.

Worship Workshop Meets Needs

In reviewing the workshop, "Making Your Worship Dynamic," offered at the Church Leader's Event in February, presenters Donald Schmidt and Ken Makuakane came to one primary conclusion: a lot of people seem hungry to learn more about worship!

A total of 114 people attended, and, as Donald observed when the session started, "This is no longer a workshop." It's hard to do back and forth with a crowd of that size, he said, and so the workshop turned into a presentation.



Prior to their workshop, Ken and Donald demonstrated good worship techniques during opening worship of the Church Leaders Event.

Donald shared several basic points that are helpful to remember when planning worship. One example is the use of some kind of lectionary to guide worship preparation, which can help ensure that you are grappling with a wider variety of scriptures.

"When we don't use a lectionary," he said, "we tend to ride our favorite hobby horses over and over."

Ken spoke about using music in worship. "What we do in worship," Ken said,

"is not just for us, but also for the people out there—we are equipping ourselves to go out and share the good news with them."

Of primary importance, he said, is to be prepared. "Practice is something you do by yourself; rehearsal is something you do with all the participants," he said. "We need always to do both prior to Sunday morning worship."

He emphasized the need to do this in advance because although worship is not a performance, there is a sense of rhythm and flow to it.

For more information contact them by email at dschmidt@hcucc.org or kmakuakane@hcucc.org.

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.



Highlights from the Website

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

Pastoral Changes

Meilani McComber retired as Pastor of Helani Congregational Church. Her last Sunday was December 29, 2013.

Roney Joel became Pastor of Hilo Marshallese Ministry at the end of December 2013. Former pastor and licensed minister, **Johnson Jetton**, moved to Meja in the Marshall Islands to serve the church on that island.

Kamaiki Anakalea resigned as Pastor of Waihe'e Protestant Church. His last Sunday was January 26, 2014.

Hanapepe United Church of Christ called **Michael Christensen** as Pastor. He began his ministry at the church on February 1. The church's Interim Minister was **Tom Fujita**, who ended on January 26.

Rennie Mau began as Pastor of Ko'olau Hui'ia Church on February 1.

Steve Hanning finished his term as Interim Minister of Lana'i Union Church on February 2.

Alan Akana was called as Pastor of Koloa Union Church and began his ministry there on February 16.

Ecclesiastical Councils Approve New Ministers

Kenneth Makuakane was approved to be a Commissioned Minister of worship and music and conference ministry by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches during the 'Aha Halawai on February 7.

Randy Reynoso was approved for ordination pending a call by the O'ahu Association on February 9.

Transitions in the Conference

Wentao Huang, staff accountant for the Hawai'i Conference and Hawai'i Conference Foundation, resigned on January 3, 2014. She had been on maternity leave since November.

Associations Announce Spring Gatherings

Mark your calendars for these upcoming Association gatherings:

- Kaua'i Association 'Aha Mokupuni, May 2-3, Wai'oli Hui'ia Church
- Tri-Isle Association 'Aha Mokupuni, May 3, Waiola Church
- O'ahu Association 'Aha Mokupuni, May 10, Makiki Christian Church
- Hawai'i Island Association 'Aha Mokupuni, May 31, location TBA



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March 2014

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

March 26	Prince Kuhio Day (Office Closed)
March 31-April 2	Clergy Retreat
April 5	Conference Council
April 12	AHEC Board of Directors
April 17-18	Maundy Thursday/Good Friday (Office Closed)
April 20	Easter Sunday
April 25-26	State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board Meeting
May 2-3	Kauaʻi ʻAha Mokuḡuni
May 3	Tri-Isle ʻAha Mokuḡuni
May 10	Oʻahu ʻAha Mokuḡuni
May 31	Hawaiʻi Island ʻAha Mokuḡuni

Tips For Making Worship Dynamic

The following tips come from "Making Worship Dynamic," a workshop led by Hawaiʻi Conference staff Donald Schmidt and Ken Makuakane during the Church Leaders Event on February 22 at Nuʻuanu Congregational Church.

- There are no rules to how we do worship, but flow and logic are important.
- Let scripture form your focus.
- If you are playing music or reading in church, practice (on your own) and rehearse (with others) before Sunday morning.
- Using a lectionary can stretch your use and understanding of scripture.
- Separating "joys" and "concerns" during worship allows for better focus on each one.
- If you can hear your voice or instrument above everyone else, you are too loud.
- Friends don't let friends play off tempo or sing off key.
- When God said "make a joyful noise," it was directed at the audience not the band.