

## Turning Tragedy into Advocacy

Losing her eyesight at age twenty-three allowed Gloria Tuuao to see.

In 2013, Gloria, a member of Samoan Church of Hawaii LMS in Nanakuli and the daughter of Pastor Iese and Mrs. Iaeli Tuuao, fell into a deep depression. Her boyfriend of three years no longer loved her, and amid a heated argument one day she tried to take her life.



Traveling thirty-five miles per hour in her boyfriend's truck, Gloria leaped out, fracturing her jaw and collarbone and cracking her skull in several places. When she regained consciousness at the hospital, she was blind due to the head trauma.

"I honestly gave up on myself," she said. "I didn't want to live

that life of hurt anymore. But God had a greater purpose for me, and that's why I'm still here."

After leaving the hospital, the ramifications of her blindness began to sink in. No longer able to shower, clothe herself, or navigate the house alone, she said she felt embarrassed but refused to dwell in depression.

Gloria saw only darkness, but her life slowly brightened. With support from her family and church, she enrolled at Ho'opono Services for the Blind, a state-funded vocational rehabilitation center.

Gloria has since learned to walk with a cane, read Braille, use computers, and practice carpentry. She credits her faith and family for keeping her strong through the worst time of her life.

*(continued on page 7)*

## Hawai'i Conference Foundation Forms Nature Conservancy Partnership

A partnership between the Nature Conservancy and the Hawai'i Conference Foundation is providing a unique opportunity for the stewardship of God's creation. The Conservancy, the nation's largest environmental group, purchased a conservation easement for a piece of land owned by the Foundation located off Saddle Road on Hawai'i Island.

The land, informally called Kīpuka 10 because it is a forest opening around the 10 mile marker on Saddle Road at Mauna Loa, is a 922-acre forest reserve rich with biodiversity and endangered ecosystems. However, invasive species such as feral pigs and strawberry guava have steadily degraded the environment, threatening to permanently change the landscape over the next decade or two.



The Nature Conservancy's Suzanne Case (left) and Jody Kaulukukui (second from right) celebrate the partnership with Foundation Director Sherman Hee and Conference Minister Charles Buck.

"We have so many special properties that it becomes difficult to be good stewards of all of them," said Conference Minister Charles Buck at an October 20 celebration of the Conference-Conservancy partnership. "We are enormously grateful for this partnership because if we are not careful we will lose these outdoor sanctuaries that God has given us."

The non-profit Conservancy plans to fence off a portion of the kīpuka to keep out non-native animals, install a boardwalk, perform educational outreach, and expand scientific research by the University of Hawai'i at Hilo, said Suzanne Case, Executive Director.

Having never been developed or used in any capacity, the kīpuka is listed within the Conservancy's portfolio of "highest priority native landscapes." An astonishing variety of native plants, including rare loulou palms, are abundant in the forest. The area is a habitat for native birds as well as the jewel and golden spiders and the picture-winged fly. Underlying the kīpuka is an aquifer believed to contain high quality drinking water. The water surfaces for fifty meters along the site, forming one of Mauna Loa's only perennial streams.

The kīpuka was acquired by Titus Coan through the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions during the Great Mahele in 1849. His widow granted title to the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (now the Hawai'i Conference UCC) in 1902.

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## Where Legion Is Common

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

So long as Ebola was isolated to West Africa and was only a news story, we felt safe.

But when American doctors treating patients in affected areas came home with the virus, and then a Liberian man contracted symptoms and checked himself into a hospital, and soon after he died two nurses treating him contracted the sickness, suddenly the threat was real. Now we were all at risk for Ebola.



With this threat came calls to close our borders, limit or ban travel to and from Africa, and quarantine anyone who showed the slightest symptoms. Never mind that scientists and other experts said that these would be ineffective given that Ebola could not spread through the air or casual contact. But they were predictable and understandable responses. In fact, that's how people and societies have always responded to mysterious maladies—even, and especially, in Hawai'i.

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*In the specter of Ebola, we still do what is essentially no different from what we were doing in more “primitive” times.*

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The one we know best, but not an isolated case in the history of Hawai'i, is the 1865 “Act to Prevent the Spread of Leprosy,” which called for the “isolation and seclusion of...leprosy persons.” From this and out of a sense of panic came the establishment of a settlement on Moloka'i, what we now call Kalaupapa, where over 8,000 persons were sent and cast out for over a hundred years beginning in 1866.

Today, we recognize and feel collective guilt for this forced exile. It was not only cruel to those who suffered it, but also inflicted deep scars upon families and communities that last to this day. And yet, in the specter of Ebola, we still do what is essentially no different from what we were doing in more “primitive” times.

Perhaps there are times when isolation and seclusion are an appropriate response, and I would hope that we would come to that conclusion never out of irrational panic, but from careful discernment informed by good science and generous amounts of reason and compassion. But if history and past practices can also guide us, we would do well to be cautious about doing so as the first option, even to hesitate because in so doing we may be committing a greater sin.

“We thought we were sinners,” is how one patient (as they choose to be called) described his feeling growing up and

living in Kalaupapa. How else could they have felt about themselves when so much shame and blame had been directed at them? The same stigma was attached to Thomas Eric Duncan, the Liberian man who started showing Ebola symptoms soon after landing in the U.S. He was blamed for his illness because he touched a pregnant woman who had Ebola, failed to declare his illness to authorities in Liberia, and put others at risk in the U.S. knowing he had the virus—all of this, as it turns out, completely untrue.

The real sin in all this is described by Duncan's nephew, Josephus Weeks:

When my uncle was first admitted, the hospital told us that an Ebola test would take three to seven days....The fact is, nine days passed between my uncle's first ER visit and the day the hospital asked our consent to give him an experimental drug—but despite the hospital's request they were never able to access these drugs for my uncle. He died alone. His only medication was a saline drip (*Dallas Morning News*, 14 October 2014).

To be separated from others and to die all alone: There may be no more harsh and cruel thing we can do to another. The gospel story of the man with “unclean spirit” (a catch-all phrase for any sickness that could not be explained) teaches us that this is more commonplace than we realize or admit. After Jesus finds this outcast man roaming in the cemetery, he offers both healing and companionship, and when Jesus asks him his name, he responds, “My name is Legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9).

In this answer is the uncomfortable realization that there are legions of outcasts among us who are sick, dying, houseless, elderly, unable to find employment, deemed special needs in the classroom, or afflicted with physical handicap or mental illness. Like the Legion Jesus met, these legions of persons are separated from community and left to wither, even to die, alone. Worse, when the outcast among us are so numerous and commonplace that we can't even see them, then we can think easily and unflinchingly of casting out a Legion or a Thomas Eric Duncan.

Jesus' parting words to Legion, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you” (Mark 5:19), remind us how important it is for every person to be part of a life-giving community where God's mercy is known and shown, and no one has to die alone.



God is still speaking

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## Church Builds Relationships throughout the World

Wider Church Ministries (WCM), one of the four Covenanted Ministries in the United Church of Christ, helps develop global relationships to build a just, sustainable and peaceful world.

“Christianity is not a national religion—it’s a global movement, and this is our calling,” said WCM Executive Minister James (Jim) Moos during a recent trip to Hawai’i. “It’s important for us to have a global presence that connects our faith to the world.”



*Jim Moos talks with clergy about the work of Wider Church Ministries.*

While in Hawai’i, Jim and Executive for Resource Development Jane Sullivan-Davis met with the Conference Council, clergy, and Conference staff and visited two churches to share what Global Ministries is doing.

With more than 270 partner churches and organizations in about seventy countries, Global Ministries is a shared mission of WCM and the Division of Overseas Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Key ministries include disaster relief, child and elderly sponsorship, sustainable development, education, political advocacy, HIV/AIDS initiatives, and sending missionaries abroad.

Funding for projects comes from UCC gifts to Our Church’s Wider Mission and One Great Hour of Sharing, and from Disciples gifts to the Disciples Mission Fund and Week of Compassion.

One project is the Congo Initiative, a special response to the situation in the Congo that began last summer. Since 1998, more than five million people have been killed by armed groups battling over the nation’s mineral wealth. The Congo has the world’s worst per capita income. The Congo Initiative has subsidized education for Congolese girls, provided potable water and food to impoverished families, renovated six hospitals, and advocated for conflict-free minerals and transparent elections in the country.

“We hope that with our prophetic ministries in the Congo, they will be able to develop their own infrastructures without our assistance at some point as they establish justice in their society,” said Jim. He added that many UCC churches helped make this initiative successful.

Churches are encouraged to collaborate with WCM’s global partners by becoming a Global Mission Church. This five-step process involves developing a long-term plan of action and is outlined in a workbook ([globalministries.org/about-us/be-a-global-mission-church.html](http://globalministries.org/about-us/be-a-global-mission-church.html)).

“People want their church to make a difference in the world, and when that happens there’s a multiplier effect for them,” Jim said. “Those global engagements—that mission-mindedness—really feeds the vitality of local churches.”

Emphasizing the importance of mutuality, Jim noted that global partnerships are give/receive relationships. “Our partners offer rich gifts such as interfaith relations and worship resources, and we cannot do advocacy without them,” he said.

The next special global initiative, to begin in summer 2015, will deal with conflicts in the Middle East. Its focus includes the Israeli occupation of Palestine—including connecting our South African partners with Palestinian partners—and addressing the refugee crisis caused by wars in Syria and Iraq, among other missions.

For more information about Wider Church Ministries and Global Ministries, visit their websites at [www.ucc.org/wcm](http://www.ucc.org/wcm) and [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org).

## Guide Helps Churches Prepare Emergency Plans

When we enter our church sanctuary, literally a place of refuge or safety, we want to feel relief, comfort and safety. Unfortunately, church buildings and properties are not immune to natural disasters, shootings, and other tragedies, which belie the sense of sanctuary.



Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Houses of Worship

June 2013



That is why the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has produced a “Guide for Developing High Quality Emergency Operation Plans for Houses of Worship,” a 38-page resource to help churches plan for, protect against, mitigate the impact of, and recover from emergencies.

A six-step process for drafting an Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) is outlined for use by churches of various sizes. Special attention is given to active-shooter scenarios.

Every church is encouraged to develop and publicize an EOP to assure members and visitors that their safety is taken seriously. Planning involves local law enforcement, emergency medical technicians and fire fighters. For churches with an existing EOP, FEMA recommends revising and adapting policies using the FEMA principles and process.

United Church of Christ–Judd Street developed an EOP in response to the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012. As part of its plan, the church installed an intercom system with audible notification and panic buttons for active shooter and other emergencies. “We actually had to implement that system,” said church secretary Eli Buckland. “Our preschool went into lockdown because an inmate had escaped and [had been] last seen by Lanakila Elementary.”

FEMA’s guide includes emergency scenarios for hurricanes, earthquakes, fires, and chemical or biological hazards. Download the guide at [www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/33007?id=7649](http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/33007?id=7649).

## Youth Gather for Fall Camp

“Catalyst for Change: Faith in Action” was the theme of this year’s camp held at Camp Erdman on the North Shore of O’ahu from October 5 to 8. Forty-six youth and ten adult leaders came together for friendship, worship, and fun.



## Fall ‘Aha Mokuḡuni

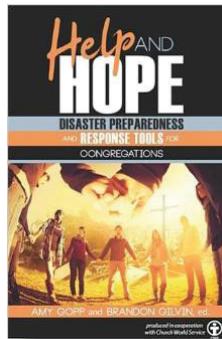
Four Associations recently held Fall gatherings to worship, learn and conduct business. The Tri-Isle Association met at Po’okela Church on September 13; Hawai’i Island Association met at Lanakila Congregational Church on October 25; Kaua’i Association met at Hanapepe Hawaiian Church on November 2; and the O’ahu Association met at Nu’uanu Congregational Church on November 15. The Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches Fall ‘Aha Halawai, scheduled for October 17-18, was canceled due to weather.



## Book Review: Tools to Equip Congregations in a Disaster

With the Puna lava flow and two hurricanes affecting the islands this year, disaster preparedness has become a hot topic. Experts remind us that it is never a question of whether a disaster will strike, but when.

*Help and Hope: Disaster Preparedness and Response Tools for Congregations* helps congregations prepare for and respond to disasters. Published by Church World Service, the book draws together experiences from numerous contributors and includes theological discussion on questions such as, "Why did God let this happen?" and the common answers, including unhelpful ones such as, "It was God's will."



The book also discusses the natural instinct for people to want to go immediately to help out in far-off disaster. But this causes unintended problems when those affected have the added burden of housing and feeding volunteers while dealing with their own needs. Likewise, loading up vans with old clothes and stuffed animals without knowing if these are needed adds more stress to an already stressful situation. Prayers, financial support and waiting until there is a requested need are usually the best ways to help.

A disaster close to home also requires listening to the needs of the community before responding. Jumping in to help without knowing the needs can interfere with first responders and others who are trained for the specific situation. Helping a community return to "normalcy" as soon as possible and planning worship services and vigils to recognize the event and honor its impact for those in the community have proven most helpful.

Long-term recovery efforts are also discussed, especially how faith communities can provide resources for long-term recovery efforts after first responders leave. In both Joplin, Missouri, after the 2011 tornadoes and New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina, the United Church of Christ publicized opportunities for church groups to help with specific needs.

The reminder to prepare now is a constant theme. Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster, organized in many locales, provide training opportunities. Create a contact list of phone numbers for church members and community leaders that can be easily accessed in a disaster. Consider how you can turn current ministries in your church into post-disaster ministries should the need arise. Prepare now to be effective during the confusion that disasters bring.

As the book lifts up to its readers, the symbol of the cross is an important reminder that God suffers with and is present with us, even in disaster.

*Help and Hope: Disaster Preparedness and Response Tools for Congregations*, Amy Gopp and Brandon Gilvin, editors (Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2014)

## Holiday Giving Goes Outside the Box

Many church and other non-profit organizations offer gift-giving opportunities during the Christmas season that allow both the giver and the recipient to make a difference. The giver can choose from a variety of ministries and the recipient will receive a card or other message to let them know of the gift and how it is helping someone around the world.

Alternative gift ideas from Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ are one way to do this. Individuals can choose from giving opportunities such as the Vulnerable Children Project, which helps children on the streets of Sierra Leone, and the Caminante Project, which protects children in the Dominican Republic from forced prostitution.

Other organizations such as Heifer International allow the giver to designate animals which are gifted to people in developing countries in the name of a friend or family member. The person receiving the animal agrees to pass on offspring to another family, which makes this a gift that keeps on giving.

The Institute for Human Services (IHS) in Hawai'i is a local agency offering gift-giving ideas. For a ten dollar donation, IHS will send a holiday card to someone on your Christmas card list with a note that lets them know a donation in their honor is providing shelter and food for people in need.

See "Tips for a Sustainable Christmas" on page 8 for web addresses of the organizations listed above and for other outside-the-box gift ideas.

## resource List

### Christmas Fund Provides Light to Clergy

"A Light Is Drawing Near" is the theme of the UCC Christmas Fund Special Offering, received annually in the month of December.



Formerly known as Veterans of the Cross, the Christmas Fund is one of the four special missional offerings of the United Church of Christ.

Administered by the Pension Boards, the fund provides pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to families of clergy and lay employees, and small Christmas thank-you gifts to retired low-income clergy. Last year almost \$1.5 million was raised. The goal for 2014 is \$1.7 million.

Visit [www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org) for resources to promote the offering. Individuals may give through their churches.

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](http://www.ucc.org/news).

## Marking History for Women in Ministry

In the town of Oberlin, Ohio, a few hundred feet from the entrance to First Church of Oberlin United Church of Christ,



there now stands a historic plaque commemorating the life and work of Antoinette Brown, the first woman ordained as a Christian minister in the U.S.

The plaque holds significance to countless others beyond Oberlin. It marks part of the history of the UCC, the church of firsts, which ordained Antoinette in 1853, and preserves a source of pride and inspiration for women in ministry who have since followed her trailblazing path.

Inside First Church on November 9, about 150 people gathered to lift up Antoinette's legacy through song, to hear the stories of her perseverance on her path to ordination, and to dedicate the Ohio Historical Marker that bears her name.

Antoinette even made an appearance through a re-enactment by Beth Marshall of First Unitarian Church of Toledo, who was dressed from head to toe in clothing from that era.

"While I may have been the first woman ordained into the Christian ministry, this day of celebration honors much more than my life and work," Beth said in her portrayal of Antoinette. "This day honors the countless women who have faced similar struggles, overcome comparable obstacles, and have found ways to minister to a world that is in such need of healing and comfort."

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## Prayers Sought for Nigerian Church after Boko Haram Attack

The largest Christian denomination in northeast Nigeria, an ecumenical partner of the United Church of Christ, has been attacked by the militant group, Boko Haram, with the assailants once again invoking religion as justification for murder.

Boko Haram fighters overtook Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) headquarters on October 29, sending those present, including families of denominational staff and Bible college students, fleeing for their lives. Compound guards were killed, a rocket launcher struck the conference hall, and the whereabouts of some of the Bible college students and family members are still unknown.

The Islamic group, which has killed Muslims and Christians who oppose their ideology of extremism, is the same group that kidnapped three hundred Nigerian school girls earlier this year.

"Sectarian violence is an affront to God and a denial of our shared humanity," said Jim Moos, Executive Minister of UCC Wider Church Ministries. "We stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, a solidarity that is made real with our prayers, with our advocacy for peace and justice, and with our financial support through One Great Hour of Sharing."

Samuel Dante Dali, President of EYN, is calling for urgent help from the international community. In a letter sent to the Church of the Brethren in the U.S, he



also called for the Nigerian government to give serious attention to the suffering of the people. "We need urgent help from the international community if the global community can have compassion on us."

Thousands of EYN church members have been killed and many churches have been destroyed in this conflict. Pastors and their families are among the abducted, and an estimated 90,000 church members have been displaced within Nigeria.

The UCC has used One Great Hour of Sharing funds to help support the work of the EYN, allocating \$10,000 this year.

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## UCC Assists in Africa against Ebola

This fall, United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries provided financial assistance to medical partners dealing with the Ebola virus in Africa with the hope that an early response will have a greater impact on containing the outbreak of the disease.

To date, UCC Disaster Ministries has allocated \$67,000 to fight against Ebola, 50,000 of which was sent in September and October to international and ecumenical organizations on the front lines in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

"One of the most important components of this response is prevention, which is being accomplished through education, sanitation, and personal protective equipment for healthcare workers," said Zach Wolgemuth, Executive for Disaster Ministries.

Global Ministries, the shared ministry of the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), is doing what it can to work against the disease, assisting partners ministering to those living in the areas hardest hit by the virus.

"The global health crisis created by the spread of the Ebola virus has created fear of the unknown and awareness of our deep interconnectedness on this planet that can be life-giving or life-impeding," said Mary Schaller Blaufuss, Team Leader for UCC Global Sharing of Resources. "The faith response to the Ebola crisis is personal."

## Merry Christmas from the staff of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ and the Hawai'i Conference Foundation



*(Tragedy into Advocacy, continued from page 1)*

"I lost a lot of friends who were telling me, 'Anything you need, Gloria, we'll be there.' But when I needed them most they were nowhere to be found," she said. "The number one thing that kept me going was knowing God loves me and never left me stranded."

Last summer, Gloria attended a National Federation of the Blind (NFB) convention in Florida. Hearing stories of blind lawyers, doctors, and surgeons inspired her to pursue her greatest passions and not let blindness be a barrier.

"I plan to be involved in the NFB, but my ultimate calling is to reach out to others because someone reached out to me," she said. "I plan to advocate for youth because they are our future, and many are troubled like I was."

With the courage to turn tragedy into positive change, Gloria said she is now the happiest she has ever been in her life. Focusing on her blessings, she said nothing can take away the joy God has given her.

"When I was sighted I always asked God to make me a more patient, kind, and humble person," she said. "It's funny, but it took me being blind to be all those things. I find myself enjoying life a little more every day, and what I'm saying is that I'm finding myself. I once was blind, but now I see."

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'uuanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817.

## In Memory: Herbert White

Retired minister Herbert De Revere White died October 19 in San Antonio, Texas, at the age of 81. The Rev. White, a former member of Church of the Crossroads, served as Associate Director of Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE) in Honolulu from 1995 to 1999 and then continued as a consultant to the organization until 2005.



A 1958 graduate of Union Theological Seminary, Herbert served as Secretary for Citizen Organizing and Public Policy Development of the UCC Board for Homeland Ministries (UCBHM) from 1972 to 1979 and again from 1982 to 1988. Through his work with UCBHM, he funded organizations and trained community organizers throughout the United States.

For a full description of the many mission and justice ministries Herbert was involved in, visit [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

Herbert is survived by his spouse Jessica and children David and Susan. Condolences may be sent to Herbert's spouse, Jessica Fernandez White, 102 Bella Vista Drive, San Antonio, TX 78228.



## Highlights from the Website

Go to [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

### Pastoral Changes

**Wendi Gordon** began as Supply Pastor of Ka Hana O Ke Akua Church in Waianae on September 15. She is an Evangelical Lutheran Church in America pastor who has served churches in Pennsylvania and Texas.

**Sharon MacArthur**, retired minister from California, began as Interim Minister of Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu on October 1.

**Tom Fujita** began as Interim Minister of Lihue Christian Church on October 4.

**Norma DeSaegher** retired as Pastor of Waipahu United Church of Christ. Her last Sunday was October 12. She served the church for five years.

### Services of Installation Held

The O'ahu Association ordained **Cindy Au** on Sunday, September 27, at Central Union Church. Cindy, a member of Hawai'i Kai UCC, is Chaplain for Arcadia Family of Companies, serving at Arcadia and 15 Craigsides.

**Miguel Morales** was installed as Pastor of Maui Evangelical Church on Sunday, October 19, in Kahului by the 'Aha 'O Na Moku'uni 'O Maui, Moloka'i Ame Lana'i.



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December 2014

# Around the Conference

## Conference Calendar of Events

- December 13 AHEC Board of Directors
- December 24-January 2  
Conference Office Closed  
for Christmas and New Years
- January 5 Conference Office Reopens
- January 10 Tri-Isle Association  
Boundary Training
- January 16 Formation Missional Team
- January 19 Martin Luther King, Jr., Day  
(Conference Office Closed)
- February 7 Conference Council
- February 16 President's Day  
(Conference Office Closed)
- February 20-21 AHEC 'Aha Halawai
- February 28 Church Leaders Event

## Tips For a Sustainable Christmas

This Christmas, think "outside the box" when considering gifts for your family and friends. Here are some possibilities:

- Choose a project from Global Ministries: [globalministries.org/alternative-christmas.html](http://globalministries.org/alternative-christmas.html).
- Ensure a sustainable future for families and women through Heifer International, which provides animals in developing countries for food and encourages the offspring to be given to others. Visit [www.heifer.org](http://www.heifer.org).
- For a small donation, Institute for Human Services Hawai'i can provide housing and food to someone in need. IHS will send a special holiday greeting acknowledgement to those on your list. Visit [www.ihshawaii.org](http://www.ihshawaii.org) and click on the "holiday card" photo.
- Give a gift to your church in honor of a friend or loved one.
- If you give traditional gifts this Christmas, consider a gift for the environment by using fabric bags or comic pages from your newspaper to eliminate wrapping paper that can only be used once.
- Switch to LED lights (solar ones, if possible) for Christmas decorations.