

Save the Date for the 2014 Church Leaders Event

The annual Church Leaders Event of the Hawai'i Conference will be held on February 22, 2014, at Nu'uuanu Congregational Church.

Church leaders are encouraged not to miss this valuable opportunity to attend workshops that will provide useful information for ministry in the church and to network with other church leaders from around the Conference.



Nu'uuanu Congregational Church will once again host the Hawai'i Conference Church Leaders Event in 2014.

National staff of the UCC will lead several of the workshops this year. They include Gordon Gilles, President of Cornerstone Fund, which provides loan and investment opportunities for churches; Patrick Duggan, Executive Director of the Church Building and Loan Fund; and Mike Schuenemeyer, Minister for Health and Wholeness Advocacy. Workshops will also be offered on legal issues, insurance matters, and church finances.

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Hawai'i Takes Stage at World Council of Churches Assembly

Despite denied visas for some delegates and protests against the WCC by conservative Korean churches, the Tenth Assembly of the World Council of Churches got off without a hitch last month in the port city of Busan, South Korea.

Hawai'i Conference Minister Charles Buck and staff person Kenneth Makuakane were among the two dozen UCC participants at the Assembly, joining over five thousand delegates, visitors, and volunteers from 345 churches throughout the world. This was the first time that an Assembly, which occurs every seven or eight years, was held in Asia, and it was the closest ever to Hawai'i.

The ten days of the Assembly were filled from morning to night with a brilliant display of prayers and songs, performances and exhibits, and addresses from church leaders and visits to local churches and missions. A hula performance and a workshop on military presence in the islands were some of the contributions made by the participants from Hawai'i.

Dozens of people watched a half-hour hula performance narrated and accompanied by Ken. Along with dancer Yuka Pilialoha Sanada from Japan, he presented several hula ranging from ancient to modern Christian.



Ken told a raptured audience that hula is more than art. It is a way of communicating and story-telling. "Restoring the hula is part of restoring the language and re-empowering the Hawaiian people," said Ken.

Charles was among several presenters at a workshop, "Inter-Island Solidarity for Just Peace," that examined the presence, role, and impact of the military, particularly the U.S. military, in islands around the world. The military in Hawai'i, Charles explained, is a very complex relationship. There is at the same time concern about and support for military activity in the islands.

Presenters from the Philippines, Taiwan, and Okinawa shared the challenges of hosting military bases on their islands. And the workshop audience heard about current protests against a nuclear naval base on scenic Cheju Island, off the southern shore of the Korean peninsula.

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The Next Great Frontier

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Because I was in Korea for the World Council of Churches Assembly last month, I missed the excitement of the crowds converging on the State Capitol as legislators debated over and voted on marriage equality. But across the Pacific, similar excitement was being played out.

Some of the excitement was caused by crowds of ultra-conservative Christians converging at our convention center site to protest the WCC as a cult and to save delegates from going to hell. Police kept them outside, on one street side, except for the lone protestor who managed on the last day to slip past security and run up to the stage of the closing prayer service, shouting something indistinguishable. He was quickly tackled by police and led out to be arrested as the rest of us sat there silent and stunned, unsure what was happening.

But we were already silent and stunned by something we had witnessed just minutes before, and to my mind much more exciting if less overt. It was an exchange over same-sex marriage. The preacher, Michael Lapsley, Anglican priest from South Africa and Director of the Institute for Healing of Memories, said,

In the last few years many of our faith communities, not least my own, have torn ourselves apart over issues of sexuality and in particular in relation to same gender loving persons.

These words, while true, would only be trite unless you were a delegate, present throughout the Assembly, for whom they were electrifying. Ten days earlier, at the opening prayer service marking the start of the Assembly, from that same podium, were these words spoken by the preacher, Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch of the Armenian Orthodox Church:

Today, we are troubled to observe not only a desertion of societal support for the family, but also a desertion of the very idea of what constitutes the family....As the family declines, so too does the Church.

This end-time theme was carried further by another church leader, who said in a business session days later that same-sex marriage would cause a "serious demographic crisis," and that politicians who push for it are "in essence pronouncing upon their peoples a death sentence."

In this context came Father Lapsley's closing-service response, an indirect apology for Karekin and others:

Today I want to say as a Christian, as a priest, to all the LGBTI community, I am deeply sorry for our part as religious people, in the pain you have experienced across the ages. I have a dream that in my lifetime, I



will hear all the leaders of all our great faith traditions making the same apology.

As slowly, lovingly, even boringly, as Lapsley uttered these words, a jolt of electricity surged through the quiet hall.

After returning to Hawai'i from the Assembly, I heard similar doomsday-themed predictions about marriage equality: the break-up of family, the end of morality, the work of the devil, and the downfall of civilization. But if history is any guide, we may end up fulfilling Lapsley's dream of apologizing for our end-times hysterics.

A recent *New York Times* article ("The Great Shakeup of the American Family," November 26, 2013) demonstrated how attitudes have shifted as ideas about family have changed. As an example,

The share of mothers employed full or part time has quadrupled since the 1950s and today accounts for nearly three-quarters of women with children at home.... Cultural attitudes are adapting accordingly. Sixty-two percent of the public, and 72 percent of adults under 30, view the ideal marriage as one in which husband and wife both work and share child care and household duties; back when Jimmy Carter was president, less than half of the population approved of the dual-income family, and less than half of 1 percent of husbands knew how to operate a sponge mop.

In fact, the stay-at-home mom caring for house and kids is really a post-World War II phenomenon. Before then, and especially during both world wars, women not only worked, but did so to contribute to the war effort. And in most cultures and times, there has been no question that women had to work if families were to survive.

In time, we will know for sure what effect same-sex marriage will have on children, families, church and society. It is, as the *Times* article concludes, the "next great frontier."

However, from my own experience, I have seen healthy children and families in all sorts of family configurations, even same-sex ones, just as I have seen broken homes and abused children in the same types of families. This tells me that real family goes deeper than form: it has more to do with the content and quality of love—ours and God's. And families where love abounds will surely not doom the world, but save it. That's our next great frontier.



God is still speaking

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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Fall Camp Inspires Youth

Thirty-eight youth and nine adult leaders gathered at Camp Mokule'ia on the North Shore of O'ahu in October for the annual Fall Youth Camp. The theme, "Real-World Faith," allowed participants to consider how faith can both support and influence their daily lives.

The three-day camp included opportunities for worship, games, activities, and family group conversations. Swimming, basketball, flag football, crafts, and tie-dye shirt making were just a few of the activities the youth enjoyed.



Youth work on creating their own "Art of Cool" symbol to illustrate the meaning of their faith.

Group sessions and worship gave youth opportunities to think about real-world faith. During one session, "The Art of Cool," led by Program Associate Ken Makuakane, youth were shown how "cool" images and symbols in advertising identify familiar products or businesses. Then they created their own images or symbols to illustrate their faith in God. They were encouraged to remember these symbols and use them to find strength when they need it most.

Staff from the Teen Alert Program of the Domestic Violence Action Center talked about healthy dating relationships. This presentation included role play and conversation around healthy relationships and respect for themselves.

During closing worship, each of the seven seniors who will graduate next spring shared how camp experiences over the years have shaped their lives.

The Fall Youth Camp does more than bring youth together for a time of fun. It shapes relationships and transforms lives. The youth returned to their churches inspired by faith and, hopefully, ready for new challenges and opportunities.

Visit www.hcucc.org for a link to a video of highlights from the Fall Camp and for a poem written by one of the graduating seniors.

Youth Reach Out with Lei of Love

United Church of Christ—Judd Street is hoping that a thousand lei will help change the lives of some of Hawai'i's most vulnerable youth.

That is the goal of the Love Every Individual (LEI) Project, an initiative to support the approximately one thousand teens and young adults living on the streets in and around Waikiki. With help from neighboring churches, UCC—Judd Street aims to provide a lei to every youth at Hale Kipa, a non-profit organization that works with youth who resort to prostitution, drugs and theft to survive.

"Our hope is that the LEI Project will be a way of letting these young people know they are loved unconditionally and that there are people who really, truly care," said Randy Reynoso, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at UCC—Judd Street.

The LEI Project is modeled after the UCC Scarf Project, which collected and distributed ten thousand rainbow scarves at last summer's General Synod 29 in Long Beach, California, in support of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) youth. Randy conceived the idea after being approached by a group of LGBT youth who asked about his scarf and were deeply touched when he explained why he wore it.

"It really touched me to say the words church, Christ and support all in one sentence to LGBT youth—and it happened because I was wearing a scarf," said Randy. "Being able to show that same kind of love and support with Hawaiian lei to kids who need that encouragement is just awesome."



Youth at UCC—Judd Street receive lei donated by program supporters.

Randy said UCC—Judd Street collected about eight hundred lei on its own, initially falling two hundred shy of the goal. But after seeking help from local churches, support began pouring in. He said lei donations from Nu'uano Congregational Church, First Chinese Church of Christ, Manoa Valley Church and countless individuals have been critical to the LEI Project's success.

UCC—Judd Street will present the one thousand lei, along with several hundred dollars in proceeds from its annual Penny Carnival, to Hale Kipa in the near future. Each lei will include a tag that reads "LEI (Love Every Individual), somebody cares."

Faces around the Conference

The Friend

Association Members Celebrate Covenant as They Gather for Fall Meetings

The Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches held its 'Aha Halawai at Lili'uokalani Church on October 18-19.



Hawai'i Island Association held its Fall 'Aha Mokupuni on October 5 at Hilo Coast UCC.



Kaua'i Association held its Fall 'Aha Mokupuni on November 10 at Kapa'a UCC.



The O'ahu Association held its Fall 'Aha Mokupuni at Manoa Valley Church on October 12.





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



“In New York City Triathlon No Quit or Excuses for Iraq Veteran”

That was the headline in the sports section of the *New York Times* on July 14, 2013. Iraq veteran Thomas Lee, Jr., son of Ka'onohi Lee of Kahului, and a former Sunday School student at Keawala'i Congregational Church, finished 2,094th out of more than 3,400 racers using a swimming, biking, running and walking prosthetic right leg.

“This was his third triathlon in three months, but his first Olympic distance triathlon,” said Ka'onohi. “Next month [August] he will be at West Point for his next triathlon. His sponsor is Team Red, White & Blue who work with former military personnel. It is exciting and exhilarating to watch his progress and his new goals.”

Times reporter Zach Schonbrun wrote: “Six years after he lost his right leg in Iraq, Thomas Lee Jr. achieved his goal for the New York City Triathlon: not quitting.”

Added Ka'onohi, “I wanted everyone to know that setting goals is important and motivation is as important.”

(Reprinted with permission from *Ka Ha A Ke Akua The Breath of God*, newsletter of Keawala'i Congregational Church, October 2013. Visit www.hcucc.org for a link to the *New York Times* Article.)

resource List

Henry Opukaha'ia Scholarship offering

Each year churches in the Hawai'i Conference are invited to contribute to the Henry Opukaha'ia Scholarship, named for the young Hawaiian credited with inspiring the Sandwich Islands Mission that brought Christianity to Hawai'i in the nineteenth century.



The scholarship is available to Members in Discernment (candidates for ministry) attending an accredited seminary and to clergy pursuing continuing education.

Churches are invited to collect the offering on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of Henry's death, which this year falls on February 16.

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.

Prayer and Advocacy Can Support Relief Efforts

Written by Anthony Moujaes

People in the United States still seeking to help victims of a destructive typhoon in the Philippines should turn to prayer and advocacy for the environment. This is what a first responder in the affected area told Matt Fehse, an intern with Global Ministries, who is in the area helping with disaster recovery.

"I asked the program coordinator if there was anything else American churches could do and she responded with 'Prayer,'" said Matt. "She said the disasters the Philippines are facing are symptoms of a larger problem and encourage Christians to advocate for the protection of the environment and a stop to wholesale mining and unchecked logging, particularly [on the island of] Leyte, which has caused landslides and flooding."

Matt is serving with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), one of the UCC's partners in the area rebuilding after the disaster.

The UCC is assisting in the recovery effort by raising money to support the victims of the typhoon that tore through the Philippines in early November. An immediate grant of \$50,000 funded early response and initial recovery work to provide items desperately needed: supplies, emergency shelter items, drinking water and money. The UCC has also issued a \$250,000 appeal to local churches and members for additional emergency relief.

Wisconsin Court Ruling Could Impact Compensation for UCC Ministers

In a case that could have wide-ranging financial impact for United Church of Christ ministers and their employers, a federal district court in Wisconsin has declared unconstitutional a law that allows ministers to receive tax-exempt housing allowances as part of their compensation.

Under the law, passed by Congress in 1954, ministers don't pay income taxes on compensation that is designated as part of a housing allowance. The November 21 ruling in the case of *Freedom from Religion Foundation v. Geithner* states that the law violates the First Amendment because it "provides a benefit to religious persons and no one else, even though doing so is not necessary to alleviate a special burden on religious exercise." The court stayed the ruling until all appeals are complete or until the time for filing an appeal has expired.

The law was challenged by leaders of Freedom from Religion Foundation, an atheist organization whose leaders do not receive a tax-exempt housing allowance.

The defendants argued that the law is necessary to alleviate discrimination against religions that cannot afford to provide

their clergy with a house and instead pay a housing allowance. The law allowing religions to provide ministers with a tax-free house was enacted in 1921 as a response to a law allowing secular employers to provide an employer-owned house to an employee tax-free so long as the employee was required to accept it as a condition of his or her job.

The court rejected this argument, stating that the secular employer-provided housing law was never expanded to include a tax-free housing allowance for secular employees, and any purpose of assisting disadvantaged churches and ministers is prohibited by the Establishment Clause. The ruling does not affect the law allowing ministers to exclude the rental value of homes provided to them by their employers from their taxable income, which the plaintiffs did not have standing to challenge.

The tax exemption applies to an estimated 44,000 ministers, priests, rabbis, imams and other religious leaders. If the ruling stands, some clergy members could experience an estimated 5- to 10-percent cut in take-home pay.

"This ruling, if upheld, will have a major effect on the way that many denominations structure compensation packages for clergy," said Heather Kimmel, Associate General Counsel for the UCC.

Grants Double Investment in New and Renewing Churches

Written by Anthony Moujaes

The United Church of Christ is doubling its investment this fall in new and renewing churches. UCC Local Church Ministries (LCM) is funding twenty-seven new, renewing and multiplying congregations with grants totaling \$458,000, which is twice the number of congregations and money invested by LCM in previous biannual funding cycles. The grants are given to churches to plant progressive faith communities in different corners of the country and support young churches early in their ministry.

"This is the largest group of applicants and recipients that we've ever had. Just for comparison, last spring we funded fourteen congregations," said David Schoen, UCC Minister for Church Vitality. "What is striking is not only the number of funded congregations, but their quality and ministry expressing the core values of the UCC."

David sees ways the diversity of the UCC is represented in the ministries that the church is supporting this fall. The group includes a large-membership congregation starting a new off-site worship service, rural congregations, Asian-American congregations, congregations from the transgender community, and African-American, European-American, and missional communities reaching out to veterans, artists, and victims of violence.

Funding for all twenty-seven grant recipients was made possible through multiple revenue sources. Each year, LCM contributes up to \$500,000 in grants for 12- to 18-month periods for new, renewing and multiplying congregations. Applications are received on August 1 and February 1 each year from congregations seeking grants of up to \$20,000.

Conference News and Highlights

Faces around the Conference: A Look Back at 2013



(Save the Date, continued from page 1)

Past attendees have said that this event provides concrete resources and knowledge that participants can bring back to their congregations to improve their ministry and congregational leadership.

"We really reaped a lot of benefits," said Waipahu UCC Pastor Norma DeSaegher. "The speakers came with a lot of knowledge. I'd say we came back from the Leaders Event with a better understanding of what we as a church should try to achieve."

Registration information will be mailed to churches in January.

(Hawai'i Takes Stage, continued from page 1)

Stories like these from around the world, and especially from the divided Korean peninsula, permeated the Assembly. In a message to member churches, delegates spoke of the "search for unity in Korea as a sign of hope in the world," and they invited others to join in the "pilgrimage of justice and peace," guided by the "illuminating Word of God."

To read the full message, or to find news stories, documents, photos and videos from the Assembly, visit wcc2013.info/en, and click on "Resources" or "News and Media."



Highlights from the Website

Go to www.hcucc.org for more stories from around the Conference.

Pastoral Changes

Kaleo Patterson resigned his ordained ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ and was ordained on October 25, 2013, as a transitional deacon by the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i.

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 96817.



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December 2013

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

December 23-January 1	Christmas Holiday (Office Closed)
January 2	Office Reopens
January 4	AHEC Board of Directors
January 11	Pension Boards Workshop
January 15	Administration Missional Team
January 18	Tri-Isle 'Aha Mokupuni
January 20	Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Office Closed)
January 24-25	State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board Meeting
January 30	Formation Missional Team
February 1	Conference Council

Take Time to Pay It Forward

This holiday season take a few minutes to try these ideas for paying it forward. Doing something kind for another is the best gift you can give yourself and others. Maybe your generosity will spur a string of pay-it-forwards for the rest of the day. Visit www.hcucc.org for a link to additional ideas found on the UCC website.

- Say a prayer for someone you pass on the street.
- Offer kind words to a person who is hurting.
- Forgive a driver who commits an act of road rage toward you. Remember the next time you are cut off in traffic that everyone deserves grace.
- Make a donation of time to your church, school, or favorite non-profit.
- Pay for a stranger's drink at a local coffee shop.
- Make a meal and take it to a neighbor whom you never get a chance to talk to or haven't heard from in a while.
- Hold open a door for someone. This is a great way to make someone's day just a little easier.