

The Friend

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ONE 'OHANA

UNIFIED • RADIANT • TRANSFORMING



Traditional Hawaiian Cultural Arts and Practices Connect Us to the Past

ARDIS GOMES, KAHU PONO, KAWAIAHA'O CHURCH

From hula and chant to lei making, kapa, and lauhala weaving, these living traditions carry memory, identity, and responsibility from one generation to the next.

Traditional Hawaiian cultural arts and practices are more than beautiful things to see. They help people remember family stories, honor their ancestors, and stay connected to the land, the sea, and their communities. Hula, chant, lei making, kapa making, lauhala weaving, voyaging, and caring for the land are all ways that wisdom has been passed down from one generation to the next. These traditions teach people to listen carefully, watch closely, and live with respect. For many families, these practices keep the past alive in a way that is active, shared, and full of meaning.

settings, hula can also be a faithful way to express praise, remembrance, and devotion. When people gather to watch and listen, they receive a gift that carries both knowledge and spirit.

Traditional arts made by hand also carry deep meaning. Lei making teaches care, gratitude, and thoughtfulness. A lei may be given for welcome, celebration, remembrance, or love, and making one is an act of kindness. Kapa reminds us of the patience, skill, and natural knowledge of earlier generations. Lauhala weaving also shows how wisdom is

passed from elders to younger hands. Mats, hats, baskets, and other woven pieces are useful, but they also tell stories about identity, belonging, and endurance.

These arts are not just decorations. They are signs of love, resilience, and cultural continuity.

Many Hawaiian

practices also teach that culture cannot be separated from the land and the sea. Navigation, planting, fishing, and caring for an ahupua'a all reflect a deep sense of relationship and responsibility. Traditional voyaging depends on careful attention to stars, winds, currents, and clouds. Farming and fishing teach balance, self-control, and respect for what God has provided through creation. The ahupua'a reminds us that mountain, stream, and ocean are connected, and that communities are blessed when resources are cared for wisely. Honoring the past is not only

about remembering ancestors. It is also about living with care today and protecting what we have been given for those who come after us.

For churches and faith communities, these traditions are a strong reminder that remembering matters. Scripture often calls God's people to remember their story, honor those who came before them, and live faithfully in the present. In Hawai'i, traditional cultural arts and practices can deepen that calling. As people listen to elders, learn stories, care for creation, and practice aloha and mālama, they grow in humility and gratitude. Hula in worship can be a beautiful way to express faith with reverence and integrity. For a United Church of Christ community, this shows that faith, culture, community, and care for the earth belong together. These traditions help guide people forward by keeping them rooted in memory, faith, and hope.



Hula and chant do much more than entertain. They help preserve history, honor special places, and remember names, events, and values that should not be lost. In Hawaiian tradition, stories have long been passed down through voice, rhythm, movement, and ceremony. Mele can speak of winds, rains, valleys, and people, while hula brings those words to life through motion. In hālau and community gatherings, students learn not only the steps and songs, but also humility, patience, and respect. In church



God is still speaking

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Mohala Farms: Inspired by the Past, Built for the Future

MARK HAMAMOTO, DIRECTOR, MOHALA FARMS



In June, two large groups of young people visited Mohala Farms to see our operations and get their hands a little dirty doing farm work. One group was the HCUCC youth here for the 'Aha Pae'āina and one was YMCA youth from around the islands here for a week-long college preparation/career exploration experience. We shared about the work that we do as a community-based farm and got them out in the fields and into the kitchen for a relaxing AND productive morning. They were both very positive, life-affirming, community-enhancing mornings that included good work, great conversations, laughter, sharing food together, as well as building and strengthening relationships.

Mohala Farms is a six-acre farm in Waialua that was started in 2005 on old sugar lands. It's a non-profit, faith and vision-driven farm that was inspired by my time living and working at Hoa'āina O Makaha, a five-acre farm in Makaha Valley. That farm was started by a Catholic priest, Gigi, from Northern Italy who had been working in the Philippines before coming to Hawai'i in the late 70's. Hoa'āina was born out of Gigi's experience growing up in a small, rural village where people lived close to the land and his experience of injustice and inequality in the Philippines. Hoa'āina was also born out of the land in Mākaha itself—land that had been cared for by countless generations of Kānaka Maoli who felt a deep sense of connection to the 'āina. It was a past in Italy, a past in the Philippines, and a past in old Hawai'i that inspired the creation of that farm.

Mohala Farms was inspired by five years of my life working and living there—immersed fully in the life of the farm and in the surrounding community. What has been created here at Mohala Farms was inspired by the past—inspired by those events and experiences that were full of God's presence and God's people. Mohala Farms was also inspired by the land, the culture, and the people who first settled these islands, people who have loved Hawai'i, people, who have experienced its life-giving qualities and made malama 'āina and aloha 'āina foundational values.



Farming is a challenging occupation and business—notorious for its hard physical work and low financial benefits. But farming is also an expression of love for the Earth. Farming calls to people who want to use their bodies physically and who want to be involved in work that is caring for the Earth, defending the natural world—defending and perpetuating biological diversity, genetic diversity, nutrient-rich soils, and nutrient-rich food.

I recently read in the book, *Native Planters in Old Hawai'i: Their Life,*

Lore, and Environment, the old-style way of building the water delivery system that fed taro patches—the lo'i kalo. The whole community came together to build the 'auwai that provided the life-giving water for all the taro patches of the various 'ohana in their area. Looking to the past, we see what people valued, what they cherished, what they commemorated in language and song.

In the Bible, one of the strongest messages that gets repeated over and over is to not forget the past—specifically, to not forget that “we” were once slaves in a foreign land and that God heard our cries and liberated us from bondage. It is the basis and foundation for welcoming the stranger, caring for the orphan and widow, defending the poor, and challenging the powerful.

A faith-based farm, honoring the past in both old Hawai'i and the Old Testament, is based on the life-giving qualities in creation and the life-giving qualities in our Creator. The Earth is a blessed creation and we are blessed to be stewards of this beautiful planet. But it is also filled with injustices and the misuse of power that destroys life. God calls us to remember our collective past, our ancestral story of liberation and redemption, and to build communities that are based on the sanctity of life that exists in creation and in each human being.

Both the youth from the HCUCC and the YMCA continued to show that when welcomed into these kinds of community spaces, a lot of people respond positively.

Redemption Without Erasure

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER



Reconnecting with my past was not something I naturally welcomed. For a long time, I ran from my childhood trauma and its entanglements – so painful

were certain people and moments of my formative years that I didn't want to reconnect. Avoidance, of course, did not protect me, it only kept me fragmented. As a queer youth of faith, life felt sharply divided. I wrestled with childhood conundrums, double binds, and misdirected longings that I did not know how to resolve.

Ultimately, I learned that the deeper wholeness, which I desired, came not from escaping this pain but from turning to it. Such reconnecting has become, for me, a redemption not as an erasure of the past, but a way of engaging it as an event from which grace grows.

Reconnecting asks courage of us. It does not mean reliving harm or placing ourselves back into unsafe situations. Neither does it deny that the past still hurts. Instead, reconnecting is to return under new conditions where past sorrow can be integrated into a larger story as opposed to standing outside the story of who we are becoming.

My wife, Kerrie, helped me understand that I was not only avoiding pain but also trying to erase its

impact. Even when I believed I had moved on, the pain would call for attention. This realization marked my turning to reconnecting. Healing does not come from cutting off parts of ourselves but from returning to them with renewed strength, care, and compassion. What began in bitterness towards myself and others proved to be an encounter with divine grace.

This work of reconnecting takes many forms. Sometimes it is therapy, where I revisit difficult moments with a trained guide. Sometimes it unfolds in quiet reflection, as I sit with younger versions of myself and offer the care they lack. At times, it includes making appropriate amends where I have caused harm. These practices are not about erasing the past, but about changing how I carry it.

Over time, I have come to see this pattern of reconnecting as deeply spiritual. From time to time, in meditation, I imagine Christ as a member of my therapy group, still bearing the wounds of crucifixion as I still bear the wounds of my childhood. Resurrection did not erase his wounds as they remain visible, recognizable, even touchable. They are a part of the testimony. In this way, Christ's body reveals that redemption does not remove history; rather, it transfigures it.

To reconnect is to face honestly the Good Fridays we live through, while trusting in the God of resurrection. What once felt unbearable can become more understandable.



PHOTO CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

What once isolated us can open into connection. What once carried shame may begin to hold dignity. This is not an attempt at romanticizing pain; rather, it is a trust that God's grace meets us within our stories, right in the midst of our pain.

Reconnecting rarely follows a straight path. It circles back, revisits old ground, and unfolds over time. If this is true for us as individuals, it is also true for the church.

What might it look like for our communities to practice redemption without erasure? How do we resist "easy grace," which urges us to move on too quickly, and instead embrace a deeper grace that invites us to remain present to one another's stories? How can we become places where people are safe to share what is still tender and unfinished?

We can begin by holding one another's stories with reverence and not as problems to fix, recognizing such stories are places where grace is already at work. We can practice listening, patience, and accompaniment. We can honor the courage it takes to return, again and again, to what has shaped us.

In doing so, we grasp a deeper truth: we are shaped by a grace that does not erase our wounds but meets us there in transforming love.

FAITH FORWARD:

An Invitation to the Conference

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Every generation that has cared for the work of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ has done so by looking back to look forward. We are honoring what came before and gathering what is needed for the work yet to come. *Faith Forward: Honoring Our Legacy & Building Our Future*, the Conference's capital campaign, sits squarely at that intersection. With initial commitments already in hand from individual donors who have helped shape its direction, *Faith Forward* now turns to the broader Conference including congregations, members, and friends, whose participation will determine how the work moves forward.

Faith Forward is built around four ministry initiatives the Conference has discerned as priorities for work ahead.

Generations of Service addresses the retirement needs of clergy who have given their working lives to Hawai'i. Many serve for decades with only modest salaries, often without the ability to build equity in a home and retire in a state where housing is among the most expensive in the country. This initiative will provide supplemental retirement support, healthcare subsidies, and emergency grants for retired clergy who have served Hawai'i for a significant portion of their career. Distributions will be administered through the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ to ensure that we can reach retired Hawai'i clergy wherever they are currently living.

Greater Community Outreach resources local congregations as they extend their ministry beyond Sunday morning. Through an annual grant program awarded by the Conference

Council, the initiative will support church-led projects in the surrounding community including community gardens, climate education, youth safe spaces, land restoration, and other initiatives shaped by the congregations themselves.

Nurturing Inspired Leadership invests in the leaders that the church will depend on in the years ahead. Across our 115 congregations and five associations, leadership must be both formed and renewed. This initiative will fund theological education and continuing learning (drawing on programs such as the Pacific School of Religion and Communities of Practice) and the formation of youth and young-adult leaders through cohorts, gatherings, and the Pastor Call initiative.

answer has two parts. First, the resources the Foundation already holds are already deployed in support of existing Conference operations. Roughly 70 percent of the Conference's revenue today depends on Foundation distributions. New initiatives require new capital, or they come at the expense of work the Conference already does. Second, a campaign is itself an act of institutional formation: it diversifies the Conference's sources of mission revenue beyond investment returns and property transactions and builds the philanthropic relationships on which sustainable ministry depends.

Over the coming year, the



Revisioning Honored Spaces raises money to restore and reimagine the historic properties that hold our story and to help congregations discern what their spaces should become next. A legacy space honors the past only when it can also serve the future. Without this work, too many of our most beloved buildings risk becoming monuments to what we used to be.

A reasonable question to ask is why such a campaign is being undertaken when the Foundation itself remains financially healthy. The

Foundation and the Conference will be inviting individual donors and congregations across the islands to participate. Conversations with each church will be tailored to its circumstances, and no congregation is too small to be part of this important work. If you would like to learn more about Faith Forward, or to discuss how a gift might be made, please contact the Hawai'i Conference Foundation. We welcome the support to honor our legacy and build our future.

On June 11 – 13, 2026, delegates, visitors, laity, and clergy came together from our 115 congregations across our islands for our 204th ‘Aha Pae‘āina at Waipahu United Church of Christ. Graciously hosted by our churches in West O‘ahu, we worshipped, listened, discerned, built bridges and relationships, played, sang, and celebrated together. Oh, and we ate more than our fill of delicious foods!







At our recent 'Aha Pae'āina, Jonathan Roach and Julie Buto had an opportunity to sit down and talk story with Shari Prestemon, Associate General Minister for Love of Neighbor and Co-Executive of Global Ministries. Our conversation was sprinkled with much laughter, and Shari's passion for her work and her respect and love for her staff were quite evident. She reflected on how her previous experiences have shaped her and prepared her for the position she has been called to at this time. Here are some excerpts from our conversation:

In this year's issues of *The Friend*, our theme is "i ka wā ma mua, ka wā ma hope: Look to the past to guide the future." With all the legacy of your predecessors, how do you envision that informs where you go?

"I think that my predecessors, and I'm going back decades now, have been very intentional about changing the model of mission, being intentional about moving away from this idea of 'we are the experts, and we have the faith, and we shall come in and tell you how to do it.' ...I think the danger is in thinking that we're done. Rather than continuing to sort of interrogate what we do and how we do it and continuing to evolve our model.

"In fact, right now, we're celebrating 30 years of Global Ministries, meaning 30 years of the Disciples - UCC partnership...we are also doing a year-long strategic planning process at the same time. Part of the work we're doing in the strategic planning process is asking other traditions, other denominations, and our peers in mission agencies, 'How has your model shifted?' Because there have been some huge shifts ecumenically. Some no longer appoint mission personnel at all anymore. Others have declined significantly, but we were still doing it. We're asking them about the pivots they've made in their model. What's been good about that? What they've learned from that,

what they would say to us about that? Because that's one way for us to reflect meaningfully on how we're doing, what we're doing, and thinking, in an informed way, about how God might be calling us afresh now, in global ministries. I honor my predecessors' work in shifting the model along the way. That was very important, and it's my continuing responsibility. To keep my eyes open and my ears open, and to reflect on the question, 'how is God calling us now to be in ministry around the globe?'"

How are you feeling about your current position now that it has been restructured and revised?

"I love what I get to do! Like all the pieces of my portfolio are a kind of representable circle for me in my ministry and experience in calling. The global ministries piece, my experience as a peace and justice intern with the World Board, and a global experience that preceded that when I was 19, are among the top three most profound things that shaped me as a person and my ministry and my call. So, for me to be able to give back to a part of the church that has meant so much to me personally, what could be better?

"I've been to Israel, Palestine multiple times before this job, because that was a place of passion for me as well. That piece is really integral to who I am and how I understand my ministry...My experi-

ence at Back Bay Mission, and being a survivor of a major natural disaster, and leading a UCC organization through that recovery, once again, shaped me profoundly. And actually, told me what kind of leader I was.

"I get to do this, and it's not just a job, it is a calling. And it does feel like...God in God's really crazy, mysterious ways, had me on a path all along that led me here. It's pretty wild."

Since you have been with us at our 'Aha Pae'āina, what has surprised you about the Hawai'i Conference?

"I've really enjoyed the levity. The moments of levity and humor, and the report from Justice and Witness that turned out to be a song and people working dollar bills into it. For me, in my own life, I also think organizationally, a sense of humor is an essential coping mechanism. I really believe that. And I practice that in my own life."

Let's talk a little bit about your visit with Pastor Kimberly Fong and Po'okela Church.

"What a blessing it is for us, in the national setting, to partner with the Hawai'i Conference and a local church. To do disaster recovery, and with your CDRC [Conference Disaster Response Coordinator], I am so glad you all have a CDRC. Not every conference has. That's real collaboration....



To be in upcountry and near Kula, where there was also a separate fire and separate damage [apart from Lahaina]...is also consistent with our model. We don't necessarily go where everybody else is going [in disaster recovery work]; we look to the margins and look to the places where people weren't even thinking anything happened. Jesus also didn't go to the places where people really wanted him to go necessarily. So, for that reason too, I'm pleased that that host site is there. And I hope we get more volunteer groups there. When a local church opens its space, complications and all, to a new thing, that's good ministry."

What is one thing we should be celebrating more in the church today?

"Our global partners—their

stories, their witness, their example... We, as the United Church of Christ, need to listen to their stories and be interested in their stories more because, especially given the challenges that our own country is facing, our partner churches know what it looks like to endure in faith against incredible odds. We are still so privileged and I mean 'we,' the big 'We.' We have to do a better job, but also, I want to get those out there in front of people and have people immerse themselves in stories and experiences when they can to gain perspective.

"I always want to lift up staff; what I know about the staff that I work with most closely is that they're such goodhearted, skilled, passionate, called people. Ask people to hold them in your prayers. Because talk

about unseen, they're scrambling every day. Just like everybody in our systems does, our local church pastors, our conference staff, association staff. Lay leaders who are holding their little church together because they can't find a pastor. We all just need to see one another and give thanks for whatever pieces we're carrying, and give each other a little more grace."

Final Thoughts

"Conference ministry actually convinced me that the most important thing any of us can do in any ministry setting is to see others. To acknowledge others. To be seen is what we all need. That's all we want, right? If we can do that, that's good."

Mission Moment: Neighbors in Need

Neighbors In Need (NIN) is a mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

The Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), and its witness among indigenous churches and people receives one-third of the NIN funds. The remaining two-thirds of this offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through awarded grants to UCC organizations.

Grants ranging from \$1,000–\$10,000 are awarded

to UCC churches and organizations for projects that address one of the following areas: the rights and freedoms of all persons, environmental justice, economic justice, and/or whose work ranges from direct service to community organizing and advocacy to address systemic injustice.

The suggested date to receive the offering is World Communion Sunday, October 4, 2026, but churches may select another Sunday.

For more information and to apply for a grant, visit www.ucc.org/nin.

**NEIGHBORS
= NEED**

2026 'Aha Youth Event

"Can I get a beep, beep?" This was the phrase the chaperones would call out to get the attention of our 'Aha youth campers who would reply, "Can I get a toot, toot?" A call and response like this is helpful when 44 youth are gathered! This year's 'Aha youth event brought together youth from Kaua'i, O'ahu, Lāna'i, Maui, and Hawai'i Island over four days. Some youth knew each other from past camps and for others (even some chaperones), it was their first Hawai'i Conference event and even their first time seeing our wider church.

There was some nervousness, anxiety, and uncertainty at the beginning, but by the end there were smiles shared, memories made, and bridges built!

In our time together, we worshipped and sang (a lot and loudly), learned about the body of Christ and foundations for bridge-building, learned about the church business of voting and resolutions, worked with 'āina at Mohala Farms, played, prayed, listened, reflected, made prayer flags for the adults at the 'Aha Mākua, shared talents, made new friends, and grew in faith. Though it was a short time together,

YZ [pronounced "wise"] literature is wisdom from the young, Generations Y and Z to be more specific. See how young people are shining, witnessing, and reflecting light.

we pray it was a formative experience, allowing youth to experience the expansiveness of our Hawai'i Conference, the love and grace of God, and the movement of the Holy Spirit.

We asked youth how they felt during our time together:

great / alright / blessed / happy / good / grateful

"I felt anxious at first, but soon very happy."

"it was enjoyable but I was a little homesick"

"very glad I was able to experience an awesome event like this"

"seen and loved"

"loved, safe, connected"

"GREAT!!!"

"I felt the connection growing and the love for God"

"good and bad because we are leaving too soon"

"I felt joy and blessed"

"I felt very welcomed considering it was my first time"



Where did our youth see God?

"when doing devotion"

"through our voices"

"when we sing songs"

"during worship"

"I know God was watching when we work together during farm"

"in the love put into the Mohala Farms"

"as we were having fun and laughing together"

"worshipping together and being in each other's presence"

"in us, everywhere we were at especially during worship"

"through the joy people had"

"when we were with the elders"

"when everyone worked together"

Many of the adults on the youth event planning team remember attending HCUCC youth camps themselves—and they're still around wanting to share that experience with our youth today. Years down the line, we will see where else these bridges we've built lead.

The planning team extends their gratitude to all who made this youth event possible:

- Mahalo to Waialua UCC for hosting and feeding our youth on Day 1 and getting us off to a great start!
- Mahalo to Kailua Christian Church for letting your interns join us and serve as leaders!
- Mahalo to Mohala Farms for

giving our youth the opportunity to connect with 'āina as a relative!

• Mahalo to the churches who sent their youth, building and strengthening bridges within our Hawai'i Conference!

• Mahalo to the 'Aha Mākua for welcoming our youth!

• Mahalo to those who donated in support of our youth event!

To learn more and see more from youth and young adults, or to submit content for consideration for future pages in *The Friend*, visit our webpage at hcucc.org/yz-literature.

Conference News and Highlights

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



Pastoral Transitions

Linda Kaauwai-Iwamoto, member of Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church, earned

her Master of Theological Studies degree from the Pacific School of Religion and graduated on May 24.

Gregory Kim, member of Central Union Church, earned his Doctor of Ministry degree from the Pacific School of Religion and graduated on May 24.



Isa'ako Moeone, member of the Samoan Church of Hawai'i, LMS, Nanakuli, earned his Master of Arts in Social Transformation and a Certificate of Spirituality and Social Change from the Pacific School of Religion and graduated on May 24.



Jihey Esther Roach has been called to serve as the Designated Term Pastor of United Community Church in Hilo. Her first Sunday was June 7, 2026.



Ardis Gomes was approved for ordination by her Ecclesiastical Council on June 11, held at the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) 'Aha Nā Kai 'Ewalu at Ewa Community Church.

Timothy Morton was approved for ordination by his Ecclesiastical Council on June 11, held at the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) 'Aha Nā Kai 'Ewalu at Ewa Community Church.



Eric E. Page was installed as pastor and teacher of Hōkūloa UCC in Puakō by the Hawai'i Island Association on

Saturday, June 27.

Ulysses Pacil was recognized as a Licensed Minister serving Maui Evangelical Church by the 'Aha O Nā Mōkupuni O Maui, Mōloka'i, a me Lāna'i in a service on Sunday, June 28.



Conference Calendar of Events

JULY 12 - 15

Micronesian Council United Church of Christ Assembly Majuro, Marshall Islands

JULY 19 - AUGUST 19

David Popham on sabbatical

AUGUST 21

Statehood Day (Office Closed)

AUGUST 31 - SEPTEMBER 2

Pastoral Leaders Retreat, Camp Mokule'ia, O'ahu

SEPTEMBER 7

Labor Day (Office Closed)

SEPTEMBER 12

HCF BOD/Conference Council Meeting

In Memory

Janet Fujioka, 92, longtime member of Church of the Holy Cross in Hilo and active member with the Conference and Hawai'i Conference Foundation, passed away on Wednesday, May 20. Janet had been actively serving the Conference and Foundation since the late 1980's. Her contributions to the Conference and Foundation are immeasurable and her insight, wit, hospitality, and generosity will be greatly missed.



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 \$15 will pay for one person's subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, 700 Bishop Street, Suite 825, Honolulu, HI, 96813.

July 2026

KŪPUNA VOICES

Reconnecting to the Past: People, Places, and Practices

How do we empower people to connect with this history through people, places, and practices?



BILL HAOLE, MEMBER, KAWAIAHA'O CHURCH

Remember the days of old; consider the generations long past (Deuteronomy 32:7).

I knew at nine years old that I would become a member of Kawaiaha'o Church when I grew up. I cannot explain how I knew, I just knew. I was inspired by the church's history and importance in the growth of the Hawaiian people. At the time the head of the congregation was Kahu Abraham Akaka, who influenced and inspired so many and me in the Christian faith as well as our Hawaiian cultural heritage. I became a member in 1977.

I had wonderful mentors through the years at Kawaiaha'o Church. Many were kind, loving, and nurturing kūpuna, young adults, and even 'ōpio including Uncle Bill and Auntie Barbara Panui, Auntie Juliette, Auntie Maddie, Auntie Aulani, Auntie Kauai, Auntie Patty, Uncle George, even

young Kahu Peter Kamakawiwo'ole when he was a youth delegate at our church, as were so many more who were key to my growth and in nurturing my faith journey. They effectively impacted my decision to become an active participant in the mission of the church.

Some were not so kind; but, they *were* always lovingly relentless in ensuring that I understood the importance of what I committed to when I became a member. Often with a firm hand and sometimes persuasive means that might have seemed strict, they formed me to become a strong, knowledgeable Hawaiian leader in our church and community. Importantly, they patiently listened to *me* as well and connected with me to find so many different ways to communicate with me. Sometimes



Kawaiaha'o Church

some insisted I, "hāmau a e ho'olohe," be silent and listen, which always included the famous, "*you might not understand now, but you will later.*" I have to admit; the latter method was the most effective.

The truth is, I am not an expert on this subject, but I learned that relentless and effective communication in Aloha Ke Akua is essential if we are to succeed in empowering people to connect with history, people, places, and practices.

Mahalo Ke Akua.