

Webpage Highlights Learning Opportunities

Authorized ministers and lay leaders interested in continuing education opportunities related to church issues now have a new tool at their disposal—the “Learning Opportunities” page on the Hawai‘i Conference website. This list of classes, webinars, and workshops in Hawai‘i, as well as those available through the internet, will be frequently updated as new opportunities become available.

Virtually all professional associations require people with certification or standing to take continuing education. Lifelong learning has enormous benefits both to the person learning and to those with whom they work. Even for ministers, exposure to new ideas and grappling with issues in changing times can strengthen and enhance ministry. This is why the O‘ahu and Tri-Isle Associations have recently taken steps to require continuing education for their authorized ministers.

For clergy in Hawai‘i it can be difficult to attend classes, workshops, or seminars because of the cost of airfare and accommodation and travel time. Webinars, or online courses, can help as participants can be present with others without having to go any farther than an online computer.

A few examples of courses currently listed on the Learning Opportunities page include UCC History and Polity being offered both in Hawai‘i and online; online courses on topics such as church planting; and one-time webinars such as those being offered by the Hawai‘i Conference Justice and Witness Missional Team.

Justice and Witness Missional Team webinars offer an opportunity to join with others via computer or telephone to learn about specific topics related to justice issues that

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Being Open Is Key to Interfaith Relationships

“How are we supposed to dialogue when, as Christians, we are supposed to believe we have all the answers?”

This was the first question asked of retreat participants by theologian Paul Knitter at this year’s Hawai‘i Conference Clergy Retreat, held March 9-11 in Kailua-Kona on Hawai‘i Island. Paul continued by saying that as Christians we can have a commitment to what we believe and still have an openness to what others believe.



Pictured left to right: Damayanthi Niles, Dale Bishop, David Greenhaw, and Paul Knitter.

The retreat was part of a three-event program to launch the Armin and Shirley Limper Program in Christianity and World Religion, sponsored by Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri.

The intent of the Limper Program, created through a generous gift from Armin and Shirley Limper, Waipahu UCC members, is to deepen the way the wider church community understands and engages with other world religions.

The retreat was led by Paul Knitter, Professor Emeritus of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York; Dale Bishop, former Executive Minister of UCC Wider Church Ministries and a Middle East scholar; Damayanthi Niles, Professor of Constructive Theology at Eden Seminary; and David Greenhaw, President and Professor of Preaching and Worship at Eden Seminary. Over forty authorized ministers from the UCC and other denominations participated in the three-day event.

Damayanthi built on what Paul shared in his opening remarks by suggesting that “instead of making everyone like Christ, perhaps we should go in pilgrimage and find Christ in the sacred places. This is the Christology of pluralism.” The Christology of pluralism, she said, recognizes that God made

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Getting Unstuck

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

It happens to everyone, I'm told, but I'm sure it happens much more often to me. Writer's block, that is.

For example, when working on a sermon, I inevitably get stuck. I don't know where to go next, or what my point is anymore, or how to bring it all to a conclusion. Those are frustrating moments—made more frustrating when I realize that the harder I try to think my way out, the more stuck I am.



In earlier years, I would force myself to sit and keep thinking. Now, I know to stop thinking and get up. A change of scenery for a few minutes is usually enough to break the block. Vigorous exercise works even better. But for truly intractable problems where the solutions are long and hard in coming, I resort to the ultimate block buster: a hot shower. Clarity comes, at least for me, with a spray of water.

It may be that truth lies within us, but I have found that it often takes an external stimulus to extract it. So faced with a problem or dilemma, rather than getting stuck in my own thoughts, I try to let go and look out. And unexpectedly a solution suggests itself—sent by God, I like to believe.

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Getting unstuck by looking outward happened recently in two seemingly unrelated events in the Hawai'i Conference last month.

The first was a visit by guests from the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea (PROK), who were exploring "mission partnership" with the Hawai'i Conference. Before coming, they told me that they wanted to see our UCC mission in Hawai'i. They wanted to see ministry in action, the gospel lived out. Frankly, I was stuck: What could or should I show them?

Eventually though, as I was reading up on the PROK and finding out about their ministries, I figured out what to do. So when they came, they visited a Marshallese worship service; a church preschool; two different retirement communities; the chaplaincy and religious education at a private school; a transition ministry for families without a home; and the stewardship of and the church's

engagement with our history from missionary past to reconciling present. And this, I said, was just on O'ahu!

Like out-of-town guests who help us realize the beauty and splendor of our home as we show them around, our PROK friends made me more deeply aware of and amazed by what God is doing through our UCC ministries in Hawai'i. If someone ever asks me what good the UCC is doing, I'll never be stuck without a ready answer.

The second event brought in a guest who suggested what to do when we're stuck in conflict, anywhere but especially at church. At this year's Church Leaders Event, nearly two hundred people from churches on every island heard a speaker from the Mediation Center of the Pacific talk about turning to a mediator, that is, someone from outside who has nothing at stake in the conflict, to help resolve differences or disagreements.

We have a ready way for getting unstuck: by turning first, quickly and often to the Mediator above all, God, who opens paths toward resolution.

Although our speaker had appreciation for, but not the specific language of, faith, his discussion reminded me that in times of conflict, we have a ready way for getting unstuck: by turning first, quickly and often to the Mediator above all, God, who opens paths toward resolution. That may involve, more often than not, I believe, a person, or mediator, through whom God effects resolution. There need not be any sense of shame, embarrassment or failure in turning to someone else to help resolve our differences, especially if it averts broken relationship.

These experiences may have spoken differently to others, but they have affirmed my belief that for those moments in life when we get stuck, there are definitely ways of getting unstuck. It just takes a willingness to look beyond our self-reliance and to seek God's provision through the gifts and blessings of others.



God is still speaking

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Affordable Care Act Cares for All

Ellen Godbey Carson is unapologetic when it comes to the Affordable Care Act (ACA).

“I love it,” she said. “This has the potential to become the world’s example for health care because it retains competition while providing care for everyone.”

Ellen, along with Aryanna Abouzari, an Affordable Care Act Outreach Specialist in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, addressed the issue of ACA in a new webinar series sponsored by the Justice and Witness Missional Team.

Ellen offered a variety of statistics to support her positive position on ACA. One of the most interesting statistics is that a majority of people say they like ACA, but if asked if they like “Obamacare,” a majority say they do not, despite the fact that ACA and Obamacare are the very same thing.

Other statistics help to tell a broad story of how many people are affected by this legislation:

- Roughly one-half of all insured have a pre-existing condition, which could have rendered them non-insurable (or insurable at a much higher cost) previously; pre-existing conditions are no longer a factor in determining health care.
- There were 48 million people without health insurance in the United States prior to ACA. Some 9.5 million new people have signed up for insurance, and an additional 9.7 million have qualified for Medicaid and CHIP (Children’s Health Insurance Program).
- Here in Hawai‘i, an additional 8,592 people are now insured and an additional 29,836 are now receiving Medicaid.

Beyond the statistics, however, ACA encourages smarter health care because it helps fund community health centers and pays hospitals for quality of care rather than quantity, said Ellen.

Both presenters spoke of some of the challenges to the ACA, including 56 attempts by Congress to repeal all or portions of it. There are also Supreme Court challenges to a variety of sections, but so far these have been mostly upheld by the Court.

Future Justice and Witness-sponsored webinars will be announced in the *Coconut Wireless* and posted on www.hcucc.org as part of Learning Opportunities.

(Lifelong Learning, continued from page 1)

affect faith communities. Presenters share in “real-time,” and participants can submit questions to be answered following the presentation. Webinars are also recorded for later listening. (See page 8 for “Tips for Participating in a Webinar.”)

The list of options for lifelong learning will continue to grow. Visit www.hcucc.org and click on “Learning Opportunities” under Quick Links.

Introducing General Synod Delegates

Joshua Weible (O‘ahu Association), a member of Kailua Christian Church, has been to General Synod before but is looking forward to attending his first as a delegate. A senior at Castle High School, he is a member of his class council and volunteers at He‘eia and Waikalua Loko Fishponds. He has enjoyed meeting people from around the world at past UCC national and regional youth events and Synods. He hopes Synod youth delegates can provide insights from their generation’s perspective regarding events and changes within the UCC.



Kathy Tanaka (Tri-Isle Association) is Treasurer of Iao UCC on Maui. Though a first-time delegate, she was at General Synod in 2011 as a chaperone for the Hawai‘i Conference youth group. “I really enjoyed the experience of the different services,” she said. “I was especially inspired by the re-nomination speech of Rev. [Ben] Guess, Executive Director of Local Church Ministries.” Outside

of church, Kathy serves as Secretary to the Chief Technology Officer of the County of Maui’s IT Services Division.

Welina Tong (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches) is an active leader at Ola‘a First Hawaiian Church, where she serves as an usher, lay reader, and praise and worship music leader. She currently attends Midland University in Nebraska on a wrestling scholarship and works full time as a certified nursing assistant. This will be her second Synod. “This General Synod I hope to contribute my input as to what I think will be the best fit for younger kids in the UCC because they are the future,” she said.



Darrel Itano (O‘ahu Association) has been a longtime member of Nu‘uanu Congregational Church. He currently serves on the O‘ahu Association Board of Directors and has assisted on the Association Nominating Committee. This will be his second Synod, which he views as a reward for his involvement in local and wider church settings.

Mele Moala (Kaua‘i Association), a member of Lihue United Church, will be attending her second General Synod. She is a student at Eastern Washington University, where she works as a residential adviser. She has served on the Kaua‘i Association Executive Board and was a member of the Youth and Young Adult Committee of the Association. Her favorite memory of Synod is worshiping with people from across the country.



Church Leaders Event

Nearly two hundred people from throughout the Hawai'i Conference participated in the Church Leaders Event held at Nu'uauu Congregational Church on Saturday, February 28.



Clergy Retreat

The Clergy Retreat, hosted by the Hawai'i Island Association, was held at the Courtyard King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel from March 9 to 11. The retreat, "Christian Theology of World Religions," launched the Armin and Shirley Limper Program in Christianity and World Religion of Eden Theological Seminary.



Church Leaders Event Focuses on Mediation

Always try mediation before filing a lawsuit.

That was the message from attorney Gerald Clay (pictured right), President of the Mediation Center of the Pacific, during his keynote address at the Church Leaders Event (CLE) on February 28. Gerald, along with Tracey Wiltgen (pictured below), Executive Director of the Center, helped CLE participants better understand the importance of mediation.



Gerald pointed out that mediation is superior to litigation because it saves money, resolves issues quickly, and salvages relationships by allowing parties to come up with their own creative solutions.

"It has actually become my passion that America's legal system does not serve the interests of our society," he said. "It destroys relationships, causes unnecessary financial and emotional strife, and the bottom line is it doesn't work as it is designed."

More than five million lawsuits are filed in the United States each year, costing over two percent of our nation's gross domestic product. The party hiring the better attorney often wins, prompting Gerald to question, "What kind of justice system is this?"



Unlike litigation, mediation creates win-win scenarios, he added. The process involves retaining an impartial mediator whose job is not to prove who is right or wrong, but to help disputing parties determine their best interests and negotiate a mutually beneficial settlement.

Effective mediation also requires empathetic listening, said Tracey in her morning workshop. Attempting to understand issues important to the other person makes that person more apt to reciprocate. Once both parties understand each other, brainstorming solutions becomes possible.

Tracey said that the majority of mediated disputes reach a settlement, and ninety-two percent of people who use the Center say they would use mediation again.

Serving almost six thousand people annually, the Center assesses a flat fee per three-hour session. The price is based on household income and ranges from a waived fee to a maximum of \$200. Businesses are charged between \$250 and \$350.

Since 1975, mediation has gained popularity in the United States as a preferred alternative to lawsuits. Mediation centers are located on all islands, and churches and individuals may contact Tracey at mcp@mediatehawaii.org for more information on how to obtain the help of a mediator.

(Interfaith Relationships, continued from page 1)

the world with all its religious traditions and languages and cultures and that it is not our job to change it, but to live into it.

The scholars all agreed that it is important to begin dialogue early and not wait until there is a crisis. The reason there is so much talk about Islam right now is because there is a crisis.

David spoke of clusters of about eight people from at least three different faith traditions who share meals in one another's homes in St. Louis. "We have more and more people eating in each other's homes as a way to build relationships that cross interreligious lines that don't just focus on religion," he said. "Because I think it is right when we say that when the bombing happens it is too late."

Dale reminded pastors why interfaith relations are so important through a story of a conversation with a student at a Christian school while visiting the Philippines. He asked her why as a Muslim she was attending a Christian school. She pointed to her hijab (headscarf) and said, "In a government-run school, I can't wear this. Here I have the freedom to live my faith."

In addition to the retreat, the scholars participated in two interfaith events. The first, "Non-Violence: Philosophy, and Practice in World Religions" was a facilitated dialogue held on March 12 in Honolulu at Honpa Hongwanji Hawai'i Betsuin. The second, "Promoting Interfaith Tolerance, Understanding, and Appreciation," was held in Hilo on March 13 at Honpa Hongwanji Hilo Betsuin.

resource List

Strengthen the Church Offering Supports Local Churches

The Strengthen the Church special missional offering builds the future of the United Church of Christ.

Money received from this offering is split evenly between the Hawai'i Conference and UCC national ministries. In Hawai'i, the money is used to fund new projects in local churches, particularly those focused on youth ministry. This is done through the Christian Investment Grants of the Stewardship Missional Team. Beyond this Conference, funds are used for youth ministry and new church starts in areas of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard.

Churches are invited to receive this offering on any Sunday, but the suggested date this year is Pentecost Sunday, May 24. Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at www.ucc.org/stc.

These news briefs, written by Anthony Moujaes, 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.

John Dorhauer Nominated for General Minister and President

At its March meeting the UCC Board of Directors approved John Dorhauer, Conference Minister of the Southwest Conference, as the nominee to become the denomination's next General Minister and President.

Needing affirmation by a two-thirds vote, John received 39 of a possible 44 votes—with one no vote and four abstentions—on Thursday, March 19, during the UCC Board's spring meeting. Just after the vote, Board members greeted John by singing his favorite hymn, "Be Thou My Vision."



Approval by delegates to the 30th General Synod (taking place June 26-30 in Cleveland) is the final step in confirming his candidacy. That vote must pass with a 60-percent majority to make him the ninth President of the UCC.

The Board took time to fully discuss the issue of diversity in the search process, as some members asked how people of diverse backgrounds were encouraged to be part of the search process. In the end, the Board affirmed that its decision follows a commitment to maintain diversity among the national officers.

"We had a diverse pool of applicants. We had people from African American and Asian backgrounds, women, and LGBT persons," said Bernard Wilson, who chairs the Board and co-chairs the GMP Search Committee. "If we didn't have that diversity, the Search Committee was prepared to extend the deadline for applicants to submit their profiles."

UCC Monitoring Vanuatu Disaster after Cyclone

After one of the strongest Pacific Ocean storms in recent history slammed into the island nation of Vanuatu on March 15, the United Church of Christ's Disaster Ministries team is keeping a close eye on the South Pacific to see how it might best bring aid. Cyclone Pam ripped through the region, leaving two dozen dead and thousands of people in need of food, water, and shelter.

"This is truly a devastating blow to a small impoverished nation," said Zach Wolgemuth, UCC Disaster Ministries Executive. "I'm unaware of an event, in my lifetime, where nearly an entire nation has effectively been destroyed by such a powerful storm. We are continuing to see very strong unpredictable storms and weather. Not only is it imperative that we respond to this event, but it is also time we take a look at our lives and daily habits and the impact we are making on climate change."

Vanuatu is home to 220,000 people, and the early indication is that the total population was affected in some way by the

category 5 storm. The United Nations stated that Cyclone Pam could be one of the worst natural disasters in the history of the Pacific. With thousands of people now in temporary shelters



and entire communities severely damaged in some areas, Vanuatu's president, Baldwin Lonsdale, has appealed to the global community for help.

Global Ministries, the shared overseas ministry of the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has one partner in Vanuatu—Churches of Christ in Vanuatu. The UCC is also cooperating with ACT Alliance, an international faith-based organization that works on long-term development and humanitarian aid around the world.

Synod Service Project Will 'Stuff the Pack' for Literacy

Composition notebooks to practice writing, pencils to complete homework, and crayons to color in pictures or words will fill backpacks. Attendees at the United Church of Christ's biennial gathering in Cleveland are being asked to take the opportunity to be part of a service project, assembling donated backpacks with back-to-school supplies to help tackle the issue of literacy.

The UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries team is organizing and leading the service project, "Stuff the Pack," during General Synod 2015, June 26-30, in Cleveland. Synod guests and delegates are being asked to help the church meet a goal of 1,000 donated bags that will be filled with school supplies by volunteers. The project will also mark the culmination of the Reading Changes Lives all-church initiative to raise awareness about how illiteracy directly impacts a range of social justice issues.



Delegation from Korea Explores Partnership with Hawai'i Conference

Four delegates from Korea traveled to Hawai'i in February to explore a possible mission partnership with the Hawai'i Conference.

Representing fifty-four churches and nearly twenty-six thousand members in the South Seoul Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), the delegation came to Hawai'i to better understand the mission work of our churches and find ways to engage in prophetic witness together.



Delegates from the PROK met with Conference leaders last month to discuss the possibility of a partnership.

"Through this partnership, we hope to work with the Conference and its churches to strengthen our local and global missions in mutual solidarity," said Min Heui Cheon, PROK Executive Secretary for Partnership and Ecumenical Relations. "By seeing so many missions here I have a real understanding of the essence of your work."

Min Heui and the other three delegates, who are pastors and Presbytery leaders, met with Conference officers and staff and visited four O'ahu churches, two UCC-affiliated retirement communities, and the Mission Houses Museum during their five-day trip. They also met with clergy, attended chapels at Punahou School, and visited a church preschool and adult daycare center, among other activities.

Hong-Kyu Choi, pastor of a large church in Seoul, called the trip "an excellent learning opportunity." He said the delegation appreciated the hospitality and welcome shown by churches and the Conference.

The delegates proposed several ideas for the partnership, including minister exchanges, teacher exchanges, joint youth

camps and youth exchanges, ministries for women in leadership, and cross-cultural trips for seniors.

The partnership's next step will be for delegates from Hawai'i to travel to Korea. Min Heui said they will plan to show the visiting delegation some church ministries, as well as areas like the Demilitarized Zone and the site of the 1980 Gwangju Uprising. Because of a history of oppression in the area, justice advocacy is important to PROK churches.

To symbolize the importance of this partnership, the delegates presented a plaque to the Conference that reads "Justice, Peace, Life" and is signed by PROK founder Kim Jae Joon.

"The value of this partnership is in helping us find the vision that is larger than ourselves," said Conference Minister Charles Buck. "Sometimes our churches feel there is no hope—that churches are dying—and we forget that God created this church and is renewing it. We need partnerships to remind us what God is doing, and we look forward to what the next steps might be."



Highlights from the Website

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

Services of Installation Held

The O'ahu Association held a Service of Installation for **Jun Lagon** as Pastor of Filipino United Church of Christ on Sunday, January 25.

David Rivers was installed as Senior Minister of Central Union Church on Saturday, January 31.

On Saturday, February 21, as part of its Spring 'Aha Halawai, the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches installed **Jeffrey Crews** as Pastor of Waiola Church.

The Hawai'i Island Association held a recognition service for **Diane Hultman** as licensed minister of Pu'ula United Church of Christ on Saturday, March 14.

Pastoral Changes

Nofotolu Alo's last Sunday as Interim Minister of Trinity Samoan Congregational Church was January 25.

Larry Roller, retired Lutheran minister, began as Interim Minister of Waipahu UCC on February 1.

Gwendolyn "Nani" Hill retired as Pastor of Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church after almost three years of ministry there. Her last Sunday was February 15.

Choo Lak Yeow ended as Interim Minister of Ewa Community Church on March 15.

Randy Reynoso became Pastor of Ewa Community Church on March 16. Previously, he was Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries at UCC—Judd Street.

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'uano Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817.



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April 2015

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

April 11	Conference Council
April 16	Formation Missional Team
April 22	Stewardship Missional Team
April 24-25	Kaua'i Association 'Aha Mokupuni
April 25	Hawai'i Island 'Aha Mokupuni
April 29	Administration Missional Team
May 9	O'ahu Association 'Aha Mokupuni
May 16	Tri-Isle Association 'Aha Mokupuni
May 25	Memorial Day Holiday (Conference Office Closed)
June 10-11	'Aha Iki
June 12-13	'Aha Makua
June 25-30	General Synod 30

Tips For Participating in a Webinar

What is a webinar? It is made up of two words: web + seminar. It is a seminar that is taught—either live or through a recording—through the internet (web). Below are some tips for participating in a webinar.

- Know the important information like date, time, web address and any passwords or access codes.
- Make note of the technical support number to call if you have difficulties logging in.
- Don't wait until the last minute. About ten minutes before the start time, click on the web address and begin the log-in process.
- Click on the button that says "Join meeting," or something similar.
- At some point, you will be asked to enter your access code or password.
- If the webinar allows voice participation, look for a button to test your speakers and microphone. If you do not have speakers or microphone, look for instructions for calling in by phone. This means you will view the webinar from your computer but will hear the webinar from your phone.