

Farming as a Life-Giving Ministry

BY MARK HAMAMOTO, CHURCH OF THE CROSSROADS, AND DIRECTOR/FARMER, MOHALA FARMS

I sometimes think that the calling to be a farmer is a rather strange kind of ministry to get into. In the church communities that I have been a part of, and in seminary at Pacific School of Religion, I don't think that I ever heard of farming being lifted up as a path that God is calling people to pursue. Running an inner-city food pantry, sure, but a ministry involving actual food production? Not really.

Returning to Hawai'i after Seminary I eventually moved out to the Waianae Coast and worked for five years on a 5-acre farm called Hoa 'Aina O Makaha. The farm was run by a Catholic priest named Gigi Cocquio. Gigi had moved out to the property a week after first being shown the land in 1979 and with the help of community members and other



volunteers from near and far slowly but steadily transformed the land into a place of healing, hope, nourishment, learning, cultural pride and spiritual growth. "The Land Shared in Friendship" has provided hands-on farming experiences for tens of thousands of local children and youth, nurtured a Woman's Support Group, a Peace Education program, an International Exchange program, a Family Gardening program, and provided a pu'uhonua for weddings, memorials, baby luaus, and refuge

for those simply needing a getaway during hard times. After nearly 40 years, Gigi is still on this same 5-acre parcel of land, serving the children, youth and families of this community.

Through my involvement at Hoa 'Aina, I became aware of other ministries of this type. In 2001, I traveled to Japan and stayed for a number of days at the Asian Rural Institute (ARI), a Christian, faith-based training institute for rural leaders from Asia, Africa and the Pacific. ARI raised the majority of their own food to feed the 75 or so people on their agricultural campus and combined grassroots leadership development with practical skills of agricultural production and raising livestock. Worship and spiritual reflection were also key aspects of this program. Hundreds of leaders from around the

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Our Faith Journey to Building Community and Healthy Habits

BY DEBBIE NAKAOKA,
CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

The Blue Zones Project was introduced to Central Union Church's (CUC) Minister of Spiritual Formation, Rev. Brandon Duran, during the Spring of 2018. Rev. Duran felt that the Blue Zones principles were in line with CUC's values and vision, provided avenues for those who might not otherwise connect to the church, and provided a way for CUC to serve the community.

The Blue Zones Project is a community-wide well-being initiative, based on research from regions



around the world that have the highest percentage of centenarians. The research has been consolidated into nine lifestyle habits/best practices

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What Are You Hungry For?

BY GABRIELLE CHAVEZ, INTERIM CONFERENCE MINISTER

Much of the activity in the season from Thanksgiving to Christmas revolves around meals. When you or I undertake to host a party or cater a holiday feast, we spend time, money and effort on the menu: choosing, acquiring the ingredients, planning their preparation, doing the cooking, and presenting the spread. These days, we also give special consideration to who is coming and their dietary predilections and needs.

Larger meals, such as our churches regularly offer, are great occasions of sharing and fellowship. Many churches now plan these meals with an awareness of creation care in the purchase and disposal of recyclable service ware, and a desire to feature local sustainably grown healthy food.

I genuinely enjoy both the process and the reward of hosting a meal that brings people together in conviviality. Some of my most fulfilling moments have been around such tables. No wonder so many of us make a priority of doing the work, contributing to, and attending special meals. No wonder the Bible compares the kin-dom of heaven to a great feast of the peoples. No wonder Jesus elevated the humble daily breaking of bread into a sacrament and reminder of the Great Commandment to love.

I do sometimes wonder, however, if we are reaping all of the spiritual benefits the labor of these special meals. It is so easy to be consumed by the necessary need of the belly and the pleasure, pedigree, and preparation of the food; the social dynamics of the company; or our judgments and feelings about the experience that either as guest or host we leave the table with a deep hunger unsatisfied.

In conversation recently with a group from one of our churches



exploring Strategic Initiative #3, “New Ways of Being Church,” a wise kupuna commented, “Our church offers a lot of activities, such as yoga, and I like them.”

But what are people really thirsty for? How will this new ministry (which includes teaching healthy eating) offer the Gospel?”

We could ask that question about anything we do as a church, but this season, let us ask as we prepare and gather around those special tables in church and home: “What does this occasion have to do with the Gospel? How might it satisfy soul as well as body?”

Given that the Gospel, or good news of Jesus is the coming of the kin-dom of heaven on earth for which a great feast of all the peoples is the pre-eminent Biblical metaphor, the answer to the question need not change what we are doing, so much as how we are *being* as we do it.

For eyes are opened to the presence of Christ in the breaking of the bread when Christ is invited to the meal. Now, since you and I are members of Christ’s very own body, that means when we are mindfully “in Christ” and are present as guest or host of the party, the *radiant, transforming love of God is at the party as well.*

Choose to be in Christ as you eat and drink, and in those moments, the kin-dom of heaven comes to earth. Taste and see how satisfying that is!

In Christ with you,
Gabrielle



Celebration Chocolate Raw Pie

10” glass pie plate

Crust

3 cups pecans or walnuts
2 cups chopped dates

Pulse nuts in a food processor with the S blade until crumbly. Don’t over process or you will get nut butter! Pulse in chopped dates until mixed. Turn out into pie plate and gently mold into a crust covering the bottom and sides.

Filling

5 ripe medium-small avocados, peeled and chopped
1/2 cup coconut oil, warmed to a soft or liquid consistency
1/2 cup raw cacao powder (can buy online or at Whole Foods)
1 1/2-3/4 cup raw honey
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon cinnamon powder
1 teaspoon sea salt

Topping

Fresh blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, cherries, kiwi slices, banana slices, mandarin orange sections, pomegranate seeds as desired

Put avocados, coconut oil, and 1/2 cup honey in the food processor and blend until smooth. Blend in the rest of the ingredients. Adjust flavors to taste. Pour into crust and refrigerate at least 2 hours. When chilled and set, arrange fresh fruit on top in a pleasing design. Serve in small slices as this pie is very nutrient dense and filling.

Be a Friend of the Hawai'i Conference

Friends of the Conference, the annual campaign to support the full range of Hawai'i Conference ministries, gratefully accepts contributions throughout the year. This upcoming year is an especially critical one as at the last 'Aha Pae'aina there was the near unanimous adoption of the Strategic Plan for the Conference. Last year's budget was not designed to support the plan as it had not been adopted yet, and we have only begun to imagine what we could accomplish with a newly reconfigured structure and adequate resources behind it.

Please prayerfully consider making an online donation through the Hawai'i Conference website



at www.hcucc.org or mailing a check made out to "HCUC" to: 1848 Nu'uaniu Avenue, Honolulu, HI, 96817. Be sure to include "Friends of the Conference" in the memo line. In order to be credited for 2018, donations must be postmarked by December 31. Mahalo for being a Friend!

Church of the Holy Cross Is a Blue Zones Church

BY ERIC ANDERSON, CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS

Church of the Holy Cross was officially recognized as a Blue Zones Church on May 20, 2018, in a ribbon-cutting ceremony during Sunday worship. Jade Iokepa, Blue Zones Community Engagement Lead for East Hawai'i, addressed the congregation. She congratulated them on their work to fulfill the requirements and urged them to continue their efforts to foster a healthier community.

Interest in Blue Zones emerged in two kupuna groups. Holy Cross' Senior Ministry invited Blue Zones representatives to speak about the project at some of their meetings, and then began labeling their lunch offerings with nutrition information. The Gathering Place participants invited a Master Gardener to give them directions as they planted a garden on church grounds, and now



include a walk around campus at their weekly meetings.

When the congregation gathers for a celebration, meal offerings include more vegetable and salad dishes than before, using fresh ingredients. Some of them come from the garden!

Farming, continued from page 1

world have passed through this Institute and have returned to their home villages and communities with new skills, knowledge and relationships that they have picked up at ARI.

Both ARI and Hoa 'Aina are places that combine the practices of growing food and caring for the earth with issues of social justice, community development, and spiritual growth. They were begun by people who had a calling to share God's love through the ministry of community-based food production, which in many ways boils down to honoring and perpetuating aspects of an agrarian way of life with the spirit of Christ as its center. In those places it doesn't feel strange to serve God in this way. There is a natural sense of wholeness that, in its ideal moments, allows one to lose one's self into the greater flow of being connected to the earth, to one's fellow community members and workers, and to the spirit that connects us together.

It's completely understandable and natural for most people in today's developed countries to be far removed from actual food production. Every city and modern civilization itself is based on advancing beyond the daily toil that Adam was sentenced to in Genesis. Huge air-conditioned, GPS-guided combines reap through thousands of acres of corn, wheat, soybeans and rice that feed both ourselves and the pigs, chickens and cows that we consume every day. We have subdued the Earth for sure—but like so much in modern life there are hidden and escalating costs to all the technological advances that we are making.

And yet, even with all the miracles of modern technology, how amazing is it that something as simple as bread and wine, made from the seeds and fruits of the earth, can be for us a completely different kind of miracle? Just as it was to Jesus' early followers, we are being called to a new way of life centered on the sacrament of God's life, broken and shared with us, on our plates and in our cups, each day.

Happenings Around the Conference



PAAM Micronesia meeting at Church of the Holy Cross



Kahu Merseberg reads from the new *Ka Baibala Hemolele*



Kristen Young, new part-time Social Media Coordinator for the Conference



UCC celebrates the "Partnership in Mission & Ministry, 1998-2018" with American Samoan churches in CCCAS



Yoga on the lawn at Central Union



Gabielle Chavez teaches Green Is the Color of Food



Gathering of former Papa Makua



Central Union Church's Kapiolani Park Moai



Service of Recognition for Charles and Melveen Kaupiko



Attendees at Partnership meeting at the Conference Office



Elly Chong makes a presentation on the Manual on Ministry at AM21.



Partners in mission and ministry



Central Union Church's 7 a.m. Moai group

Habits, continued from page 3

that support a healthy lifestyle, longevity and living more meaningful lives. It is about connecting with one another to walk, to talk, and to build relationships that make us stronger and better together, while supporting each other to build healthier habits. Research found that those who attend church live longer and live more abundantly.

The Blue Zones Project encourages churches and the community to make the healthy choice the easy choice through events supporting the Power 9 Principles:

1. **Move Naturally** – find ways to move more
2. **Purpose** – know your sense of purpose in life
3. **Down Shift** – find ways to reduce stress
4. **80% Rule** - eat mindfully and stop when 80% full
5. **Plant Slant** – put less meat and more plants on your plate
6. **Family First** – invest time with family
7. **Belong to a Faith-Based Community** – create time for spirituality
8. **Right Tribe** – surround yourself with people who support positive behaviors
9. **Social Hour** – enjoy time with good friends each day

In May, a CUC Blue Zones Project team was formed, comprised of congregation members with backgrounds and interests in healthy lifestyle, meditation, mindful movement, agricultural research, and plant-based and gluten-free cooking. The CUC Blue Zones Project seeks to create a spiritual community that helps transform lives holistically, addressing the mind, body and spirit.

Over the course of the year, members of the congregation and the community were invited to attend various events:

- **Blue Zones Project Kickoff** at the 7 a.m., 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.

worship services offered plant-based dishes: lemon herb spinach quinoa salad, garlic sesame tofu poke, and a Greek salad

- **Walking Moais** provided opportunities for deeper social interactions ('moai' is an Okinawan term for social support groups that meet for a common purpose)
 - 7am Service Moai – walks in the community around CUC
 - A colorful purple coleslaw, avocado, heirloom tomato, corn and black bean confetti salad was prepared for the Moai Kick-Off
 - The CUC Historian led a historical walking tour of its campus discussing CUC's rich history and involvement in the formation of other churches and organizations
 - 4pm Thursday Moai – walks around Kapiolani Park
- **Yoga on the Lawn** – yoga on the sanctuary lawn
- **Mindful Movement Yoga** – mindful yoga
- **Mindful Movement Bamboo Stick QiGong** – mindful movement
- **Green Is the Color of Food** – a green smoothie demo and discussion related to the benefits of greens in our diet
- **Purpose Workshop** – to discover one's purpose in life

During our journey, we discovered that the Blue Zones Project was important to our community, not just our church or individuals. Small group activities became opportunities for making new friends, providing a sense of togetherness and a chance to do something healthy at church for the congregation as well as the public. Being healthy is a sacred promise that we need to make—it is not just a commitment to personal health.

We are looking forward to planning future events that nurture our faith and well-being!

mission Offering

Kalaupapa Sunday

On the fourth Sunday of every January, churches are invited to commemorate the estimated 8,000 people diagnosed with Hansen's Disease who were exiled to Moloka'i's remote Kalaupapa peninsula.

Resources for observing Kalaupapa Sunday are available on the Hawai'i Conference website (www.hcucc.org). A resolution passed at the 195th 'Aha Pae'aina also encourages churches and individuals to make donations toward the construction and maintenance of a memorial listing the names of every person sent to Kalaupapa. Funds may be donated to the nonprofit Ka 'Ohana O Kalaupapa.

The suggested date for observing Kalaupapa Sunday is January 27, 2019, though churches may honor the patients of Kalaupapa and their families any Sunday in the year.

Henry 'Opukaha'ia Scholarship

Each year on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of Henry 'Opukaha'ia's death, churches are invited to receive an offering to support scholarships in his name.

Henry 'Opukaha'ia Scholarships, which honor the legacy of the young Hawaiian credited with inspiring the Sandwich Islands mission that brought Christianity to Hawai'i, are available to candidates for ministry attending an accredited seminary and clergy pursuing continuing education.

Churches are invited to receive an offering to support these scholarships on Sunday, February 17, 2019. The offering may also be collected on another date.

New UCC Manual on Ministry Addresses Newest Generation Called to Serve

The United Church of Christ's Ministerial Excellence, Support & Authorization (MESA) team has just released a

newly revised Manual on Ministry. The Habakkuk Group, a diverse committee of 17 UCC members from across the country, worked for three years on this revision, which includes both the theological grounding and specific details to support regional Committees on Ministry in their work. Eleanore Atherton Chong, co-chair of the committee, summed up the task set before them this way: "Our task as the Habakkuk Group was to assist Committees on Ministry by producing a document which would lay out best practices for ministerial authorization. The landscape of the church has seen radical changes in the past 30 years. We needed to respond to those changes in ways that would keep us true to who we are as the United Church of Christ."

The 2018 Manual on Ministry can be ordered through UCC Resources.



UCC Environmental Justice Leaders Respond to Moral Imperative in New Federal Climate Change Report

Responding to a climate change report released by the U.S. Global Change Research Program on November 23, UCC justice leaders issued a statement urging immediate action, calling this a moral imperative. This climate assessment, a detailed analysis of the effects of climate change on every facet of life in the United States, contradicts views expressed by President Donald Trump. Left unchecked, climate change could likely destroy or drastically alter business, the economy, social services, agriculture, health care, and more, according to the report. The Rev. James Antal, Special Advisor on Climate Change to the UCC General Minister and President and longtime creation justice advocate, concluded, "The study makes clear that climate change is already intensifying every social injustice we, as a people of faith, are committed to address."

A special webinar (http://www.ucc.org/creation_justice_webinar_series)

will address the Fourth National Climate Assessment. It takes place Wednesday, January 9, at 8 a.m. Hawai'i time. Guests will include the Rev. Jim Antal and a climate scientist, and is part of the UCC's Creation Justice Webinar series. More information can be found at http://www.ucc.org/creation_justice_webinar_series.



God is still speaking



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Highlights from the Website

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

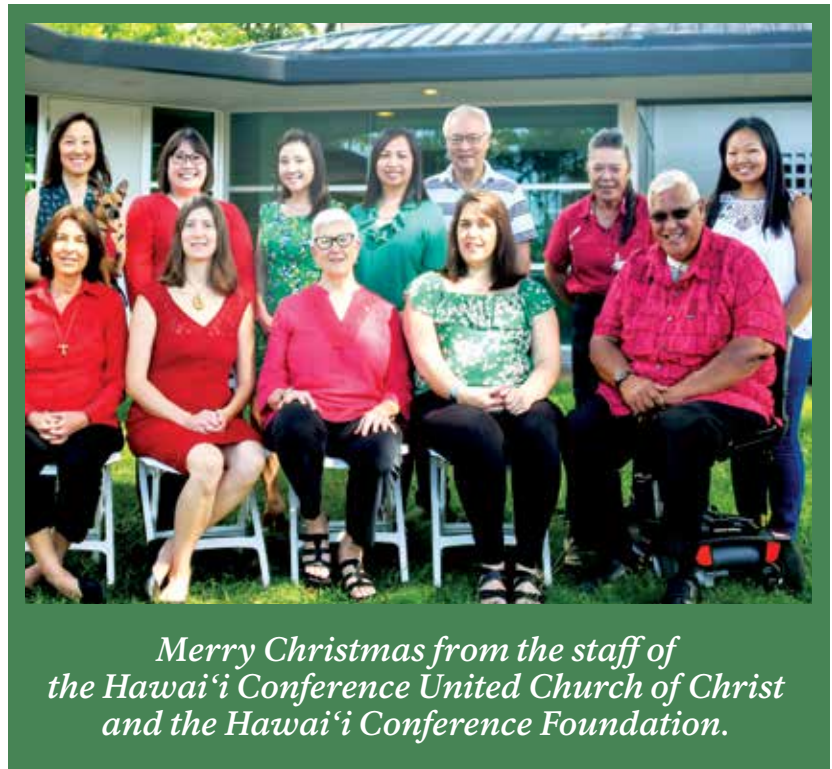
Service of Recognition

Melveen and Charles Kaupiko were recognized by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) as licensed ministers of Hau'oli Kamana'o Church in Captain Cook on Hawai'i Island on December 1.

Conference Office Transitions

Kristen Young joined the Hawaii Conference staff as a part-time Social Media Coordinator. Her responsibilities include managing the Conference website and social media accounts, and providing staff support to Strategic Initiative #4, "Gifts and wisdom of the next generation." Her email address is kyoung@hcucc.org.

Bertman Lee departed the staff of the Hawai'i Conference and the Hawai'i Conference Foundation as the Controller on December 6.



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

Save the Dates!

- **Church Leaders' Event:** February 23, 2019, on O'ahu

Learn how to invite others into the life and ministry of your church. Reach out, welcome and nurture youth. Work in small groups of two or three to process information and practice skills.

This is what is being planned for the Church Leaders' Event. Tracy Barnowe, Minister for Church Vitality, will be the main trainer and she promises that participants will leave with a plan that any size church can use. The Formation Missional Team is offering this event for pastors and church leaders, so save the date of February 23. More information will be sent to local churches. Let's come together and learn to reach out, invite, welcome and nurture.

- **Pastoral Leaders' Retreat:** March 20-22, 2019, at St. Anthony Retreat Center on O'ahu

More details and registration information to follow soon.

Conference Calendar of Events

December 25	Christmas Holiday (Office Closed)
January 1	New Year's Holiday (Office Closed)
January 4 - 5, 2019	Conference Council Retreat with Cynthia Scherr
January 21	Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (Office Closed)
January 26	State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board
February 2	Conference Council and Foundation Trustees
February 8 - 9	AHEC 'Aha Halawai
February 18	Presidents' Day (Office Closed)
February 23	Church Leaders Event

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 Avenue, Honolulu, HI, 96817.



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Ka Papa Ho'olāla

Kaua'i Association's Fall Mokupuni

BY SANDI STERKER, KAUCS PRESIDENT

The Fall 'Aha Mokupuni was held at the Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church on November 4. We started with a sharing session based on the Three Great Loves—Aloha Keiki, Aloha Kakou, Aloha Aina, and the Bible verse from John 15:12: "My command is this, love each other as I have loved you." Members of all the churches were asked to tell stories that related to each of these three loves and how it related to the Initiatives from the Strategic Plan. It started out with a great choral arrangement from the Marshallese children singing. Rex Piercy shared about Tutu and Me at the Hanapepe UCC that trains caregivers for children. There was great sharing about Love of Children and "This Little Light of Mine" was sung.

On to stories about Love of Neighbor: Every year Lihue United Church has a big Memorial Day breakfast. This year the proceeds went to Kaua'i Economic Opportunity which feeds many of those in need. Hanapepe UCC has a kokua kitchen



and thrift shop to feed and clothe those in need. Church of the Pacific takes top honors for their food bank with an abundance of canned food plus fresh produce that are given out every week. Koloa Union Church is working on becoming an Open and Affirming church and asked for prayers to make this happen. Olaf Hoeckmann-Percival of the Waimea UCC not only has Bible study at his church, the High School, the Middle School, and Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church, but also at the Regency at Puakea. Glenn Frazier told of the wonderful things happening with Hope for Cambodia and how Christianity is growing by leaps and bounds. Chaplain Sarah

Jones shared ways for church members to feel comfortable with hospital patients. We all sang "Love One Another Lullaby" to celebrate Love of Neighbor.

So many stories were shared about Love of Creation, from Zumbathon to sewing to use of facilities and land, but, of course, the best is our wonderful Waimeke Cabins up at Kokee State Park. Andrea Kaohi shared a story board made for churches to show to their congregations and plan for retreats. Singing "This Land Is Your Land" was followed by joining in a circle for "Hawai'i Aloha." The Waimea O Ni'ihau people graced us with singing during the break before the church service.