

Leaders Event Explores Future of Church

BY WAYNE IBARA,
MAKIKI CHRISTIAN CHURCH

How does the church remain faithful today? This was the focus of author Jeffrey Jones' presentation on February 24 at Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu. About 150 people from the Garden Island to the Big Island attended the Church Leaders Event sponsored by the Hawai'i Conference's Formation Missional Team. The setting was apt because the church today *is* at a crossroads.

Jones called upon church folk to wrestle with difficult questions rather than to hope for easy answers from "experts." After a career in helping churches, he concluded that he had missed "the major point." Renewing the church isn't enough; "what we need is resurrection—which means that to some degree, we need to die. ... The current model no longer serves God's mission."

This "doesn't deny the good that churches continue to do and the faithfulness of church folks," but Jones encouraged four "postures"



Jeffrey Jones delivers the keynote presentation.

to "increase our ability to align with what God is doing ... ways of standing so we see more clearly":

1) Reclaiming the Ethic of Jesus—returning to Jesus' radical teaching, such as loving our enemies.

2) Focusing on Spirituality—As author Gil Stafford proposes, this means being stewards of sacred safety (hospitality); holy listeners; advocates of silence; and wisdom teachers (from the book *When Leadership and Spiritual*

Direction Meet).

3) Facing Addiction—"The bottom line is congregations are caught in patterns of addictive behaviors (that lead to death) ... until they are named and faced, and the congregation finds a way to ... move beyond its fears and find a new way of being."

4) Embracing Paradox—Christianity is based on the paradox of the Incarnation—God becoming human. This defies logic and dualistic

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Margery Williams Terpstra

Retreat Addresses Strategic Planning, Domestic Violence

This year's Hawai'i Conference Clergy Retreat gathered ministers in Kailua-Kona for three days of continuing education, fellowship and prayer. Attendees enjoyed free time by visiting family, journeying around the island, experiencing the spiritual legacy of Pu'uhonua O Honaunau National Historic Park, and attending

one of the island's best lu'aus.

In her opening remarks, Gabrielle Chavez, Interim Conference Minister, encouraged the clergy to help manifest the vision they want to see for our churches 10 years from now. The first plenary was a special pastors' listening and feedback session to discuss the Conference's

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In Christ – Aloha

BY GABRIELLE CHAVEZ, INTERIM CONFERENCE MINISTER

Dear Friends,

We are in an exciting season in our Conference as the work of the strategic plan is coming together in time to bear fruit for June’s ‘Aha Pae’aina! Having been present at many of the meetings during the last three months and comparing notes with our hard-working consultant Cynthia Scherr, I can see that the fruit we all most long for is a UCC Hawai’i Conference that answers the prayer of Jesus Christ, the head of our body, “that we all may be one.”

And so we have been talking together across the waters about how best to transform the sense of disconnection that many now feel in our Conference to become a strong and healthy expression of Christ’s body—many diverse members united in the love of God and neighbor, or as our Hawaiian hosts have taught us to say, “Aloha.”

Indeed, last year’s ‘Aha Pae’aina charged the Strategic Planning Team with drafting a plan for our Conference that reflected the uniqueness of Hawai’i as well as the shared values of the United Church of Christ.

In the process, some of us are learning that aloha is much deeper and broader than the way it is



commonly used now as a greeting, farewell or endearment. As I am coming to understand aloha, it is a spiritual reality, a state of being in attunement

with fellow humans and nature that sounds very much like the kingdom of heaven to me. The word itself includes *ha* or breath—which we do not create but which can be shared. This is quite similar to the way the Bible talks about the *ruach*, or breath, or spirit of God that animates all life.

I learned on our recent “Huaka’i Saili Matagi” listening journey around the Conference that our Pohnpeian sisters and brothers also have a word like aloha, *kaselehlie*. I’d love to learn the other words that the native speakers among us use to express deep, God-given spiritual love and connection.

English, however, lacks an equivalent word for all that aloha means. If there is a word for something, it’s been noticed and named. Thus, the materialistic Western mindset disregards spiritual truth.

But the Bible has noticed the mystery that aloha names. Consider the picture of God’s true being both in diversity and unity which we describe by the equally impossible to define word, “Trinity.” In Ephesians 4:6 we read of one unified all-loving God “who is above all and through all and in all”—a Creator above all whose Spirit is in all and whose perfection manifests through humans as Christ.

God’s way of being in diversity and unity is in every human’s DNA, but very few humans fully express our genetic potential! The good news is that as Christians we have help. We are members of Christ’s body with Christ’s mind and spirit, saved by grace and commanded to love one another. We know that when we truly follow Christ, we arrive at the kingdom of heaven.

Here is some valuable wisdom about both the kingdom of heaven and aloha from Hawai’i’s Queen Lili’uokalani, who toward the end of her brilliant, brave and Christlike life said this to her hānai daughter Lydia K. Aholo:

To gain the kingdom of heaven is to hear what is not said, to see what cannot be seen, and to know the unknowable—that is Aloha. All things in this world are two, in heaven there is but One.

May all be one in Christ!

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thinking. It invites the discovery of new ways of faithfulness.

Jones’ prescription for the church can be found in his book *Facing Decline, Finding Hope*, the basis of his presentation. He offers five old and new questions for congregations:

- 1) Not “How do we bring them in?” but “How do we send them out?”
- 2) Not “What should the pastor do?” but “What is our shared

ministry?”

3) Not “What’s our vision and how do we implement it?” but “What’s God up to and how do we get on board?”

4) Not “How do we survive?” but “How do we serve?”

5) Not “What are we doing to save/help people?” but “What are we doing to make the kingdom of God more present in this time and place?”

The Formation Missional Team plans to follow up with participants on all islands about their experience at the event.



God is still speaking



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1848 Nu’uanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817

Phone: (808) 537-9516 or (800) 734-7610 (Neighbor Island Toll Free)

Fax: (808) 521-7196

E-mail: hcucc@hcucc.org

Contributing Writers: Wayne Ibara, Brandon Duran, Carolyn Jean David

Register for Western Regional Youth Event

BY BRANDON DURAN,
CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

When you enter the presence of God, you never leave the same way. The stories of scripture repeat this simple truth time and again. The presence of God transforms us in ways beyond what we could ask or imagine. While we cannot manufacture such experiences, we can create a context wherein we attune our hearts to the voice of the still-speaking God.

The Western Regional Youth Event (WRYE), to be held in Hawai'i for the first time since 1994, is such a context. WRYE is more than a youth conference, it is an invitation. The weeklong event from June 25-29 at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa

WRYE 2018 HONOLULU, HI

invites youth to engage with God through worship, service projects and

friendships. It invites youth to grow in the love of God and to use their gifts for grace, peace and justice.

In Isaiah 55:1, God calls people to "come to the water" as part of an invitation to come and find life. This summer the Hawai'i Conference invites youth from 12 different states to "E Hele Mai I Ka Wai" (Come to the Water, the theme for WRYE) in order to explore themes

of connection, life, stewardship, and faith together. WRYE will include the UCC's Executive Minister of Justice & Local Church Ministries (the Rev. Traci Blackmon), the Polynesian Voyaging Society, workshops ranging from lei making to youth organizing to faith practices, local musicians, service projects with Mohala Farms and Ho'oulu 'Aina, a trip to the Polynesian Cultural Center, and more! Check out www.uccwrye.com for more information and to register. The deadline to qualify for the early registration fee of \$475 is April 13. Thereafter, the registration fee is \$495 until the final deadline of April 30. Contact the Rev. Brandon Duran (808-440-3010 or brandon-duran@centralunionchurch.org) or Joan Sakaba (sakabaj001@hawaii.rr.com) with your questions.

WRYE is our opportunity to live into our belief that "We, the United Church of Christ, affirm the responsibility of the Church in each generation to make this faith its own in reality of worship, in honesty of thought and expression, and in purity of heart before God" (Preamble to the UCC Constitution). WRYE gives youth the opportunity make this faith their own and rouses them to envision, in partnership with God, how the church will look in the generations to come. Send your youth to WRYE!

Domestic Violence, continued from page 1

strategic plan with consultant Cynthia Scherr. Centered by singing the collective prayer created by delegates at last year's 'Aha Pae'aina, clergy discussed the Conference's draft mission statement and eight draft strategic initiatives in small groups. Special attention was given to the voices of those ages 40 and under.

The remaining plenary sessions were presented by Denby Toci, Director for Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse programs at Child and Family Service in Hilo. Her topic was "what you should know about domestic violence." Through statistical data, definition of terms and stories about the battered as well as the batterer, Denby offered insightful do's and don'ts for clergy dealing with domestic violence.

All were deeply touched by Denby's own experience with abuse and the ways her faith in God helped her find healing. One of the most profound moments in her presentation was her sharing a long list of the names of women, men and children who had died in Hawai'i as a result of domestic



Guest speaker Denby Toci leads a plenary session.

violence. Denby reminded the group that the question we should ask is not, "Why doesn't she just leave?" but instead, "Why does he batter?"

The gathering ended with the celebration of communion, a fitting expression of unity that clergy experienced as partners in ministry.

Save the Date for the 196th 'Aha Pae'aina

The 196th 'Aha Pae'aina of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ will be held June 6-9 at Community Church of Honolulu. Event details and registration forms have been mailed to churches.

Church Leaders Event

Church leaders from throughout the Hawai'i Conference participated in the 2018 Church Leaders Event held Saturday, February 24, at Church of the Crossroads. Approximately 150 people from 42 churches were in attendance.



Clergy Retreat

The annual Conference Clergy Retreat was held March 5-7 at the King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel in Kailua-Kona. Plenary sessions covered the Conference's strategic planning process and how churches can address domestic violence.





Gary Augustin (back row in middle) stands with volunteers in post-hurricane Puerto Rico.

UCC Members' Selfless Response to Disasters

Six months after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, residents are still trying to recover. On September 20, the Category 4 storm flattened thousands of homes, killed scores of people and devastated the island's infrastructure. A mental health crisis ensued as calls to Puerto Rico's suicide hotline tripled in the weeks and months following the disaster.

"The way the storm hit, people feel demoralized," said United Church of Christ minister Gary Augustin, who volunteered in Puerto Rico as a mental health worker with the U.S. National Disaster Medical System. "The dynamic probably plays in that, 'Where is God? Look at what happened to us.' This will impact people for years."

From October 16-31, Gary, who is the executive director of Samaritan Counseling Center Hawai'i, provided support at a community health center serving 200 patients per day. He primarily counseled medical staff experiencing fatigue and low morale due to working long, emotionally draining shifts, but also helped families dealing with sick or dying loved ones. He

performed chaplaincy duties and led church services twice a week.

Gary shared the story of a police officer whose significant other was hospitalized when Hurricane Maria made landfall. After working mandatory 12-hour shifts for 10 days, the officer checked on her partner only to realize that she had died the night

the power went out.

"She was very distraught and depressed," said Gary. "I only met with her once, but there were other situations where people in the community were referred to me. There was a school teacher fearing that she had a deadly virus that had killed several people, including her neighbor."

In mid-February, more than 400,000 Puerto Ricans remained without electricity. Millions of residents endured months without adequate food and clean water, and medical care was scarce as damaged hospitals limped toward becoming fully operational.

"In the ER, people might sit for four or five hours before they were treated," said Gary. "Our team managed our patient load to where they only waited 10 to 15 minutes, so a lot of people came to our site rather than hospitals."

Gary said this was his first volunteer response to a major disaster. If his services are requested in the future, he is eager to help again.

"There is a feeling or call within me that if there is a need out there, I will go and help," he said. "A lot of people shy away from these situations, but I have a mindset where that doesn't faze me."

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mission **Offering**

Strengthen the Church

Strengthen the Church, one of four special mission offerings of the United Church of Christ, builds the future of our denomination.

Split evenly between the Hawai'i Conference and UCC national ministries, money received from this offering largely

supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard.

In Hawai'i, Strengthen the Church breathes life into new local church projects, especially those focused on youth ministry, through Christian Investment Grants administered by the Stewardship Missional Team.

Churches are invited to receive this offering on any Sunday, but this year's suggested date is Pentecost Sunday, May 20. Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at www.ucc.org/stc.

UCC Youth Take a Stand on Growing Gun Violence

Youth groups from the Minnesota and Southwest Conferences traveled to Washington, D.C. to join the national March for Our Lives rally to protest gun violence on March 24.

As a 16-year old youth from Minnesota stated, “We as a faith community need to make sure that we’re not just praying, not just keeping those who are in pain in our thoughts. We need to make sure that we’re turning our compassion and kindness for others into action to make the world a better place.”

The Rev. Shari Prestemon, Conference Minister, Minnesota Conference, reflected on why it is important for the church to be a



part of a movement for change. “Young people need and want to see relevance in their church. They want to bring change. This says in a very concrete way, ‘Yes we get it, and we can be there with you. You can do this through your church.’ The church can be the vehicle for the change they want to see in the world.”

Finding Love and Acceptance in UCC Church

A Philadelphia-area church and one of its members was featured on a national video program that has been giving a voice to women who show courage in the face of discrimination.

Jennifer Angelina Petro, a transgender woman who found her spiritual home at Love in Action UCC, caught the attention of Vox Media and *Divided States of Women*, a 24-episode series which is highlighting women’s stories around the world, focusing particularly on women who have been marginalized. Petro, who wrestled with her identity for much of her life, started looking for a spiritual community when she was deeply depressed, struggling with the consequences of coming out as trans.

The Rev. Josh Blakesley, pastor of Love in Action UCC, stated, “Often those of us in UCC circles



forget how fortunate we are, especially those of us in Open and Affirming (ONA) congregations. It also calls to my attention the increased need for all of us in welcoming congregations to be louder with our welcome and stronger in love and cooperation. We shouldn’t assume that people feel welcomed in churches.”



Generous Bequest Boosts OGHS Endowment

A couple from rural Pennsylvania who loved the UCC and were significant supporters of the church’s work around the world—missions funded by One Great Hour of Sharing—will be making a major impact on that ministry forevermore.

The estate of Wilbur and Jane Valentine has generously donated more than \$1.1 million to the OGHS endowment fund, with another donation in that same amount sent to support United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries—to continue changing lives of less fortunate people around the world.

In 2010, the Valentines received the Ambassador’s Award from the UCC’s Global Sharing of Resources Office, honored as the most generous contributors ever to One Great Hour of Sharing. Before their deaths, Jane, who passed away in October 2015, and Wilbur, who died in September of the next year, had donated more than a quarter million dollars to Wider Church ministries. With these gifts, that total tops \$2.6 million.

News briefs are adapted from *UCC News*, the online news portal for the United Church of Christ. For details on this and other stories, visit www.ucc.org/news.

Highlights from the Website

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

Pastoral Changes

Linda Petrucelli retired as Pastor of Hilo Coast United Church of Christ on January 14.

Alpha Goto ended his ministry as part-time Interim Pastor of Wai'oli Hui'ia Church on February 10. He previously served as the church's pastor from 2004-2017.

Service of Ordination and Installation

Russell Kirby was ordained and installed as Acting Minister of Congregational Life at Central Union Church by the O'ahu Association on March 11.

Conference Office Transition

Scott Davis, Assistant for Search and Call and Communications, resigned from the Hawai'i Conference staff on March 16 after five years of service.

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Another example of a UCC member helping with disaster response is Danny Tengan of Hawai'i Kai UCC, who has volunteered following numerous events in Hawai'i and beyond. He supported relief efforts after the flood that caused over \$80 million in damage to the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in 2004; Hurricane Katrina which devastated New Orleans in 2005; the Kaloko Dam break that killed seven people, including a pregnant woman, on Kaua'i in 2006; Superstorm Sandy in 2012; and several other disasters.

While the work of Danny and Gary has positively impacted many lives, there is always a need for more volunteers. The United Church of Christ is currently seeking volunteers for long-term disaster recovery on the mainland as well as donations to support recovery in other areas. Learn more about how you can help at www.ucc.org/disaster.

Barry Mick, Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church, contributed to this report.

In Memory



Gabe Fackre, 92, eminent theologian, respected teacher, prolific author and passionate activist who devoted much of his life to serving the church, died on January 31. He was the Abbot Professor of Christian Theology Emeritus at Andover Newton Theological School, where he spent 25 years on the faculty before his retirement in 1996. He was the father of Gabrielle Chavez, Interim Conference Minister of the Hawai'i Conference.



Oarson Ramon, 62, Senior Pastor of UCC Pohnpei Maui since 2007, died on February 16. He was ordained in 1996 by the United Church of Christ Pohnpei and previously served churches in Pohnpei and Saipan.

Conference Calendar of Events

April 13	Hawai'i Conference Foundation Trustees
April 14	Conference Council
April 28	Hawai'i Island Association Spring Mokupuni Woman's Board of Missions Annual Meeting
May 5	O'ahu Spring Mokupuni
May 12	Conference Minister Search Committee Tri-Isle Spring Mokupuni
May 18-19	Kaua'i Association Spring Mokupuni
May 19	Conference Council
May 28	Memorial Day (Conference Office Closed)
June 6-9	'Aha Pae'aina

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Our Historical Roots

Rev. Margery Williams Terpstra

BY CAROLYNN JEAN DAVID, CENTRAL UNION CHURCH, POHNPEIAN MINISTRY

This edition of Our Historical Roots profiles a figure in contemporary history who made a profound impact on the Pohnpeian community in Hawai'i and beyond.

About a year ago, the passing of the Rev. Margery Williams Terpstra was devastating to the Pohnpeian community. Serving as a missionary in Pohnpei alongside her husband, Dr. Chester Terpstra, Margery also worked on an education project in Pohnpei for the University of Hawai'i in 1967, finishing her Ph.D. in 1972. From there she became known as "Nohnno Marge," meaning "Mother Marge" to all Pohnpeians. In her book *Life Is to Grow on: The ABC's of Holistic Growth*, she wrote, "To love someone is to summon them to Life!" This is exactly what she has



done. Nohnno Marge was a good wife, teacher, counselor and loving mother not only to her children but to Pohnpeians as well. She summoned our grandparents to the life of Jesus Christ and spoke the Pohnpeian language fluently. Her ministry of faith in Jesus Christ has brought us, the descendants of her pupils, to now continue her work.

In the state of Hawai'i, the Pohnpeian community has

two United Church of Christ congregations on Hawai'i Island, two on Maui and two on O'ahu, plus our very own Pohnpeian Ministry at Central Union Church. We are the proud grandchildren of the pupils of Margery Williams Terpstra. Even though not all of us got to meet her, if you mention "Nohnno Marge Terpstra," we all know who she is. We are very grateful to Marge and her family for she has summoned us to the life of Jesus Christ.

In her last years, she would visit the Pohnpeian Ministry in Honolulu and always remind us to be proud of where we're from and to be strong in our faith. Nohnno Marge has left us with *kaselehlie*, or as the Hawaiians would say, *aloha*. God bless you, Nohnno Marge.