

# The Friend

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## WHAT. A. YEAR

As we were planning for this issue of *The Friend*, we initially chose the theme “Anticipation,” looking forward to what the future might hold for the Hawai‘i Conference. While we felt we could not turn the page soon enough on 2020, it became clear to us that 2020 wasn’t done with us yet. So we pivoted our perspective to look back over a most unusual year.

The COVID-19 pandemic is still on the rise, with record numbers of people falling ill and dying every day in the U.S. Mental health issues, domestic violence, and social isolation are all increasing to frightening levels. WFH (work/working from home) became a popular acronym,



and sweatpants and t-shirts became the new work attire. Schools moved to online learning, forcing families to adjust and illuminating the injustice of social disparities experienced by disadvantaged populations. Travel came to a grinding halt and the tourist industry was shut down. We were subjected to increasingly partisan politics and vitriol leading up to the presidential election. Church as we knew it looks very different now.

There are so many losses we need to mourn; too many events that had to be cancelled or postponed—proms,

graduations, weddings, funerals, baby’s first lu’aus, sporting events, holiday gatherings—the list goes on and on. There have been too many loved ones dying without the opportunity to grieve communally. In the Hawai‘i Conference ‘ohana, we have lost too many beloved servant leaders: Clement Malani, Sr., Grant Lee, Richard Kamanu, Kekapa Lee, and others, although not from COVID-19.

As we find ourselves in the season of Advent, we prepare for the coming of the Christ child and look for signs of hope, peace, love, and joy. Although the pandemic is still raging in areas around the country, there comes word of a vaccine that is over 90% effective and is on the horizon. Travelers are returning to the islands in greater numbers. **Hope.**

Out of the deep divide of partisan politics came an election in which a record number of people exercised their right to vote, and we have a new President-Elect who promises to focus on reuniting our country and restoring the soul of America. A President-Elect who wants to repair relationships with our allies around the world. **Peace.**

We hear inspiring stories of people who show their love of neighbor every day by wearing face masks to keep not themselves—but others—safe; of HCUCC Disaster Ministries and local churches organizing food and face mask distribution events; small acts of kindness shown to complete strangers across our country. **Love.**

People are reconnecting with friends they haven’t been in contact with for a long time—through social

media, but also through time-tested letter writing and calling on the phone. Families are spending more quality time together in new and creative ways, with jigsaw puzzles popular again. As communities gradually open up again and relax restrictions, people are able to gather and see friends and fellow church members—at a physical distance, of course. Although our ‘Aha Pae‘āina had to be postponed, we found a way to hold a virtual meeting successfully, allowing more people to participate, both as leaders and attendees. **Joy.**

There is a light that shines in the darkness, a light that the birth of the Christ child brings to the world. Let us follow that flicker of hope into 2021.

We hope that you continue to stay healthy during this pandemic and that you enjoy this issue of *The Friend*!

*Mele Kalikimaka  
E Hau‘oli Makahiki Hou!  
Wishing you a very Merry Christmas  
and a Happy New Year!*



God is still speaking

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## E Ho‘oku‘ikahi Kākou—Let Us Covenant Together

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Hawai‘i Conference 198th ‘Aha Pae‘āina, under the theme, “E Ho‘oku‘ikahi Kākou—Let Us Covenant Together,” was held virtually for the first time October 4-10. The online format of the annual meeting allowed for greater participation by leaders and attendees from Hawai‘i and beyond.

“The Opening Session—from the welcome by Kahu Makuakane, Kawaihae quartet’s singing, to the powerful sermon by Kahu Kealahou—set a tone of history, ever-renewing faith and purpose amid a pandemic and national political pandemonium. The immanent feel of the ‘Aha Pae‘āina was an overwhelming sense of openness that came from workshops and meetings (e.g., with the Hawai‘i Conference Foundation, ‘Aha Makua Financial Report, and ‘Aha O Nā Kahu) that took the time to educate, share cultural distinctions and commonalities, answer questions, and explain the thinking and rationale of local church, Conference, and Foundation leaders. It was refreshing, inclusive, and gave me a sense of kuleana for our future! The closing sermon by Reverend Popham showed us new ways of doing the good work of



Christ to transform ourselves, our church, and the United Church of Christ in Hawai‘i.”  
—Kahu Naleen Andrade, Kahikolu Congregational Church

“Each day began with a worship and devotion. The workshops were fantastic, I enjoyed ‘Doing Music during Pandemic’ and Rosemary McCombs Maxey’s



testimony. Although it was virtual, it was well done, and I enjoyed it thoroughly.” —Shirley Ota, Pearl City Community Church

The Conference extends its gratitude and a very big “Mahalo” to all who contributed to making this ‘Aha a success.

### Hawai‘i Conference Council Officers 2020–2021

“It is a challenging year for the Hawai‘i Conference, for its churches, its kahu, and its leadership. My prayer is that we will do two difficult and necessary things: meet the immediate needs provoked by this global pandemic, and also understand and implement the vision shaped over the last few years of discussion and discernment. I invite the prayers of all our Conference in that work.”

—Eric Anderson



**Chairperson:** Eric Anderson, Church of the Holy Cross

**Vice Chair:**

Kealahou Alika, Wailuku Union Church



**Secretary:** Douglas Wooten, Kaumakapili Church

**Treasurer:** Roda

Tabilas, Filipino United Church of Christ



## 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](http://www.hcucc.org)). A resolution passed at the 195th ‘Aha Pae‘āina 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 24, 2021, though churches may honor the patients of Kalaupapa and their families any Sunday in the year.

## Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia Scholarship

Each year on the third Sunday in February (closest to the anniversary of Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia’s death), churches are invited to receive an offering to support scholarships in his name.

Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘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 21, 2021. The offering may also be collected on another date.

# Field Walking 2020 for Missed Treasures

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

My wife, Kerrie, and I are fans of a British television show called *Time Team*. This show follows a group of archeologists as they travel around the British Isles on fresh archeological digs. I have learned that one of the tried and true methods of exploring a new dig site is “field walking.” This technique of archeological survey is what I used to do as a kid on my grandfather’s farm, although we did not call it archeology—it was just fun. From time to time my cousins and siblings and I would walk across the fields looking for arrowheads that were turned up by the plow. 2020 has certainly been a year for the record books. Because of the unique complexity brought on by the novel coronavirus we would do well to field walk and discover what might have been turned up by life’s plow.

No doubt the biggest impact of COVID-19 for communities of faith is upon how we think about worship services. Pre-COVID we mainly conceived of worship as a time-bound and place-specific activity. Worship occurred at certain hours on a Sunday morning in our church’s sanctuary. Now, with services being recorded and uploaded to the internet people can join in worship at all manner of hours of the day and from the location they choose. For some

congregations this issue is fraught with anxiety about measuring up and finding themselves attractive to a broader audience. Church is just as needed now as it was before. How we go about being the church and conceiving when and where ministry occurs has changed. We no longer need to be time-bound and place-specific. The tools exist for us to transcend an older way of conceiving ministry and mission.

Another field-find lies in the growing relationship between the Hawai’i Conference and the Pacific School of Religion through the Certificate for Theological Education for Leadership (CTEL) program. This ministry has longed been planned for, and desired by, Conference leadership. It was a powerful moment to watch it launch in early September. The Pacific School of Religion has brought together a diverse cohort of professors who reach us from the continent, the Philippines, and even from here in Hawai’i. Just like our former worship services, through online learning platforms we are less place-specific for classroom purposes as students join from home, from their cars, or from the break room at work. It has been a joy to link with those seeking a deeper knowledge of leadership within the setting of the church. It has also

been delightful to watch as each professor begins by asking about our names and our stories so that we may understand how the

history of our lives intersects with church history, church education, and biblical interpretation.

A field-find that is difficult for some to recognize is that the 1993 Redress did not live up to expectations. Wounds, pain, anger, and sorrow still mix and taint the water we seek to share in Jesus’ name with those who thirst. I am grateful for the ongoing work of the Reconciliation Group and the openness of the Council to enter difficult and messy conversations concerning our legacy.

Finally, we must take note that this year has been marked by change. A new Conference Minister conceives and enacts ministry differently than previous Conference Ministers. The passing this year of Grant Lee, Richard Kamanu, and Kekapa Lee, who served as beloved pastors and on the Conference staff, has left an indelible hole in the Conference. The pandemic has both uprooted old ways of being church and planted new ways of being church. We need to be extra vigilant in these times—double-checking to make sure no one gets lost and helping each other to find paths forward that meet our mutual needs. 2020 has not been the easiest year for ministry. Yet, time and time again our ministers and lay leaders rose to the occasion. Held up by God’s grace and goodwill from each other, we traversed a long and difficult field together. May God continue to bless us with such rich treasures in the future.





# A Challenging First Year!

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I have now been with the Foundation for exactly a year, and what a year it has been! It has been an adventure coming up to speed on the many issues and properties of concern to the Foundation. Doing so in the setting of a pandemic and a time of economic uncertainty has made it all the more interesting.

Among the challenges of the year were the financial markets. This year has seen a market dive and recovery, and volatility that has had few precedents in the annals of the investment market. The pandemic has had a deep and negative impact on our economy and will affect our investments and holdings for some time to come. Our market investments have seen a recovery since the market crash last March, and our investments are showing modest gains for the year, but we will continue to experience much volatility in the coming year due to market uncertainties. Market performance for our funds has been consistent with the benchmarks used by our investment managers. The Foundation's investment committee will continue working with our financial advisors to watch our investments and rebalance to promote continued growth with some insulation from the volatility.

Another challenge has been with our real estate holdings. Altogether, there are almost 175 tax map key parcels owned, leased, or managed by the Foundation. In some cases, multiple parcels are associated with a single church or property (such as Craigsides). The vast majority of these are non-income producing properties, including historic church properties, cemeteries, and conservation lands. Therein lies one of the great challenges for the Foundation as an institution: there is a

cost associated with holding these non-income producing properties. Many of the properties the Foundation holds are held in trust for local churches and used by local churches. The Foundation must absorb some ownership expenses. The investment properties have also seen a diminution in income this year, in some cases related to the need to provide tenants with rent relief, and in other cases, such as those we hold at Craigsides, due to increases in costs related to necessary capital repairs and maintenance items.



Wai'oli Hui'ia Church

One of the specific challenges of the year has been the situation in Hau'ula, where a group from outside the UCC sought to occupy the historic Hau'ula Congregational Church property and use it for that group's purposes. They then challenged the Foundation's title and Hau'ula Congregational Church's right to use the property. That situation has now been fully resolved, with the title confirmed to the Foundation and possession of the church restored to the leadership of Hau'ula

Congregational Church. All this was at a significant financial cost. The silver lining here is that the Foundation's trust relationship in holding the property for the historic Hawaiian church was tested but held strong.

To support increased escalating property expenses and mission expenses of the Hawai'i Conference, the Foundation has had to draw from its unrestricted funds at a rate that over the long term is probably not sustainable. As such, going forward, the Foundation and the Hawai'i Conference will be working to reduce spending to preserve the investment corpus. The HCF will also be looking at opportunities to reinvest assets to yield a better return. The HCF's goal is to get the investment draw funding the HCF and the Hawai'i Conference to a sustainable level over a seven-year period, so that the good work of the Hawai'i Conference and the churches can continue in perpetuity.

It has been a year to test the Foundation, but I believe the Foundation has so far weathered these challenges. What I have discovered is that the leadership of the Conference was wise to create the Foundation in 1968. Despite challenges, the Foundation has grown over the years and has been able to support Hawai'i Conference program and mission needs in a way that has been the envy of other Conferences in our denomination. The Foundation is essentially healthy and will continue to serve the needs of the Hawai'i Conference long into the future.



## WE REMEMBER

*Richard Kawaiakalani Puninani Kamanu*

It is with a heavy heart that we mourn the passing of Kahu Richard Kamanu, on October 24, 2020. His presence and leadership were a blessing to the Hawai'i Conference long before he became an Associate Conference Minister.

In 2015, Richard became part of the Hawai'i Conference staff, where he continued to touch and impact many lives by providing leadership for congregational search teams, Association boards and councils and Committees on Ministry. In the office he provided both a wealth of institutional and cultural knowledge for staff members as well as an abundance of smiles and good humor. The Conference staff continues to give thanks to God for Richard's ministry to and among us.



Kahu Richard



Richard blessing a Hawaiian Airlines plane



Richard and his siblings



Richard on the day of his ordination at Kalapana Mauna Kea Congregational Church in 1982



'Aha Papa Hīmeni 'O Hawai'i (2007)

*Remembering Richard Kamanu*

See full remembrances at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

Kahu Richard Kamanu was a gentle, jovial, good-humored, cheerful man who loved God and served God well. As a lay leader, I had the pleasure of serving with him during his last three years when he was Pastor of Kapa'a First Hawaiian Church. —Isaiah Ka'auwai



Booming, contagious laughter and kind eyes that smiled with a hint of "kolohe-ness" is my memory of Richard as boarders at Kamehameha School-Kapālama Class of 1975. Richard shared his musical gifts as a member of the Concert Glee Club and song contest leader for our junior men. —Marilyn Kaohi Hasegawa



Kahu was a key founder of the annual 'Aha Papa Hīmeni or Hawaiian Choir Retreat. It was through the retreats that Kahu's love of music and service in the church became more and more apparent. —Kealahou Alika





## In Memory

Harvey Kekapa Pauole Kealakala'i Lee, 74, retired pastor, passed away on November 19. Kekapa graduated from Kamehameha Schools—Kapālama and completed a four-year enlistment in the Army, before going on to graduate from the University of Hawai'i Hilo. He received his Master of Divinity degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1978. He was ordained and installed as Pastor of Waiola Congregational Church in Lahaina, Maui, in 1988. He also served



as Interim Pastor of Lili'uokalani Protestant Church and as Pastor of the English-speaking congregation of The First Chinese Church of Christ in Hawai'i. For six years Kekapa served as Pāpā Makua of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and the State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches. Gifted with a beautiful singing voice, Kekapa was a Na Hōkū Hanohano Award winner for Religious Album of the Year in 1998 for *Aloha Kekahi I Kekahi (Love One Another)*. He retired from active ministry in 2018.

## Aloha to Three Beloved Kahu

WAYNE IBARA, PASTOR, MAKIKI CHRISTIAN CHURCH

The Hawai'i Conference mourns the loss as it celebrates the lives of three beloved kahu who have gone on to greatest glory in the last few months. The Rev. Dr. Grant Shao Chi Lee, 75, passed away on July 28; the Rev. Richard Kawaiokalani Puninani Kamanu, 63, on October 24; and the Rev. Harvey Kekapa Pauole Kealakala'i Lee, 74, on November 19. Each served local congregations and as staff of the Hawai'i Conference.

Through his decades of ministry, Grant Lee encouraged and celebrated the concept of “story”—our story, God's story, “talk story”—a potent, insightful, and engaging way to conduct ministry and to encourage the growth of Christian community. If the gospel can be thought of as a

good “virus,” Grant did his best to serve as a “super spreader.”

In his last decade of service, he was a passionate volunteer adviser for Vancouver School of Theology's Indigenous Studies Program, which he saw as an effective resource for many local church leaders.

Richard Kamanu received his Master of Divinity from Chicago Theological Seminary and pastored Hau'ula Congregational Church, Kapā'a First Hawaiian Church, and Kaumakapili Church before becoming the Associate Conference Minister for O'ahu in 2015. Through his love of music, he chaired the *Na Himeni O Ka 'Ekalesia* hymnbook revision committee. He also served on the United Church of Christ

Board of Directors for Local Church Ministries, and as a spiritual advisor for Hawaiian Airlines.

Kekapa Lee graduated from the University of Hawai'i Hilo campus after serving in the U.S. Army. He then enrolled at Fuller Theological Seminary. “It was a feeling, a sense that God was calling to me,” he said in an interview with the Honolulu Star-Advertiser in 2018. “I was trying to figure out what God wanted me to do. I prayed, and people prayed for me. God just opened the doors for me, financially and everything.”



## Remembering Grant Lee and Kekapa Lee

PHILIP MARK, RETIRED PASTOR AND ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

In the beginning God was probably up to something when Grant was the upper classman assigned to help me navigate my first year in seminary. About a year later I married his sister! Our friendship and collegial relationship grew subtly through the years. From the early 1990s toward the early 2000s, the Hawai'i Conference experienced a moment in time—Associate Conference Minister staffing through

a cohort of age and experience including Grant and Kekapa who were the heart and soul in many aspects of Conference life and mission. Kekapa was appointed to a number of national UCC special committees, and he ably communicated the *mana'o* of this Conference to the national setting of the church. Both Grant and Kekapa lived the sense of community that they preached and taught.



Phil Mark, Grant, Adrienne Lee Mark

## Friends throughout the United Church of Christ Remember Kekapa Lee

Such sad news. I thank God for Kekapa, his ministry and ask for prayers for all who loved him.

—Rev. Diane Weible, Conference Minister, Northern California – Nevada Conference UCC



Kekapa with his brother, Richard, (left) and Tom Fujita

I give thanks to God for the life and ministry of Kekapa Lee. When he sang, I felt as if the angels in heaven were among us.

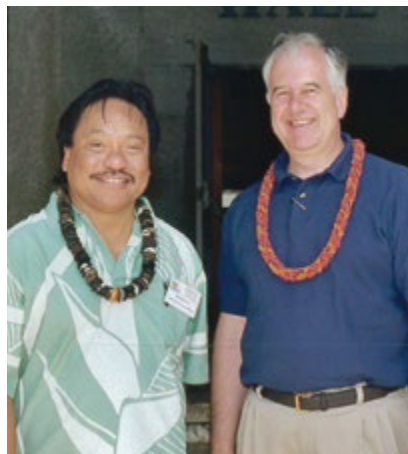
His spirit was an open and free one in which all around him felt the power of his love and kindness. I am sad to learn of his passing, though I know that he has found the eternal love of his beloved Jesus.

—Rev. Dr. John C. Dorbauer, General Minister and President, United Church of Christ

This just takes my breath away and breaks my heart. Kekapa served in so many ways in the national setting during the many years I was there. I remember worshipping with him on a Sunday where the Samoan community gathered to joyfully bring their offering and commitments for the upcoming year. Kekapa helped organize a Samoan Choir from Southern California that offered a concert at the 50th Anniversary celebration in Hartford. So many memories of Kekapa who was a kind, gentle, thoughtful and caring soul. A wonderful smile and warm heart generously shared with so many. Prayers for his family that he loved so dearly; I heard many stories of them over the years. —Edith Guffey, Conference Minister, Kansas-Oklahoma Conference UCC

I am heart broken. Kekapa and I first worked together when he was on Hawai'i Conference staff in the 1980's and we worked on West Regional stuff together. Then there were many interactions over the years. He was a kind, gentle soul who taught me a lot about the Hawaiian culture through example. I continue to listen to his wonderful CD of music whenever I am driving around Tennessee!

—Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister, Southeast Conference UCC



Kekapa and John Thomas, former UCC General Minister and President.

## CCM Addresses Racism in the Church

The Council of Conference Ministers (CCM) of the United Church of Christ recently released an open letter to members of the UCC addressing racism, white supremacy and privilege in the church. Read an excerpt of the letter below. Read the letter in its entirety on the Conference website at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org). David Popham, Conference Minister, is part of the CCM and has given his support to this letter.

“We [CCM] recognize that the history of the UCC includes a wide array of narratives: those of myriad immigrants, formerly enslaved persons, colonists, indigenous communities, and more. Our predecessor bodies included abolitionists as well as slave owners; those who believed that racial inequality was established by God, and those who affirmed God-given racial equality with passion and fervor.”

“Our predecessor bodies included those who pressed for the forced assimilation of indigenous peoples as well as those who stood in solidarity with and advocated on behalf of indigenous people. Our history contains the very best of American history regarding racial equality and it contains some of the worst. As a body made up of myriad traditions, theologies, languages, and geographies, our predecessor bodies reflected the society and time around them. Yet out of that complexity and contention arose something new: a movement of unity in the face of difference, our United Church of Christ.”

“Our covenant is that we will move into self-reflection and clear-eyed conversations with open hearts to hear one another without fear or judgment. We understand that talking about racism, white supremacy and privilege in the church is difficult. However, due to our shared commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in response to God's invitation to unity, we are empowered to engage in these daunting and uncomfortable conversations. May we do so, as we are led by the Holy Spirit as God's people.”



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.

Youth of different grades, islands, and churches gathered online during the ‘Aha Pae‘āina to play games, explore the theme of covenant, and even share how the church can be in covenant with them. “Our youth are calling the church to a new way of love in the world.”

The youth event was planned and led by Rev. Christopher Czarnecki (First United Protestant Church), Sasha Kamahele (Kawaiaha‘o Church), and Kristen Young (HCUCC & Central Union Church).

Young adults were also invited to gather for fellowship and conversation on Monday evening of the ‘Aha Pae‘āina. Their sharing of hopes for the church was made into Friday’s devotional.

The young adult gathering was hosted by Rev. Mary Herbig (Central Union Church).

“The most important thing about church to me is the people and how they contribute. I learned... that when we say ‘The Church’ we aren’t talking about the physical building but the people who are within that building.”

“I wish that my church would do more community outreach...”

“Tackling the injustices of people who have been oppressed, whether it be the widow, orphan, or people of color—will be a HUGE stepping stone to reflect the Glory of God.”

“The church can do a better job loving each other by being more accepting with no judgement...”

“My hope for the church is that we can make everyone feel like they belong...”

“I hope that the church will commit to covenant with the people and ‘āina that surrounds us. I hope we can redistribute power and resources to those who are most vulnerable as part of our responsibility to love.”

“For all people’s voices to be heard... [to] build authentic relationships with those who share different values and beliefs than us.”

“I hope to see... the talent of the younger members be recognized and a way paved to have young leaders play a crucial role in the church.”



Youth voices were shared in the closing worship of the ‘Aha and young adults’ hopes became Friday’s devotional. Read/hear their full responses on the HCUCC website: [hcucc.org/youth](https://hcucc.org/youth).

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](https://hcucc.org/yz-literature).

## News from our Associations and Affiliates

### Richard Chun Celebrates 70th Anniversary of Ordination

ISAIAH KĀAUWAI, MEMBER,  
KAPĀA FIRST HAWAIIAN CHURCH

Mahalo nui, Kahu Chun, for a very brief but straightforward-with-no-fluff interview on "What advice would you give to young people who are considering going into ministry?"

[I really, really appreciate Kahu Chun because whenever he shared his message on Sundays, he kept it simple, short and to the point.] His response is: "Trust God; do his work; he will take care of you." Because Richard Chun accepted the call, God took care of him.

"Listen and obey, and it will all work out. There's nothing mysterious," he added. I chuckled when he shared the following: "Feel the call and accept it. Don't try to run away." How many of us run away? In high school, Dick Chun was part of the Christian Endeavor group at The First Chinese Church of Christ on O'ahu. He prayed about his call, but it took some time, as he questioned whether the call was real or not.

In college on the continent, he taught Sunday school at a local church. He worked with kids and really enjoyed it. That sealed the deal for him. "This is what God wants me to do." While his father and uncle had different ideas of a career for him, Kahu Chun turned them down.

Ho'omaika'i'ana, Kahu Chun, for your 70 years of serving our pae'āina o Hawai'i nei!

Richard Chun served in churches on O'ahu, Lāna'i, Hawai'i Island, and Kaua'i, and in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, and as an interim conference minister.



Richard Chun

### When COVID Strikes a Small Island

STEVE JERBI, PASTOR, LĀNA'I UNION CHURCH

For most of 2020 there was a sense around Lāna'i of the pineapple days. The resorts were shut down and our tight-knit community enjoyed the benefit of our remoteness—COVID free. Of course, that changed a few weeks back when the virus came to our island, and we experienced a major outbreak.



Things escalated quickly as the four cases became 30, became 70, and then over 100. While the Kosrae community of Union Church was hit hard, they are the true heroes of the story. As soon as the outbreak happened, the response was swift and effective. Community spread was stopped. The CDC and other public health officials look at Lāna'i—and the Micronesian community in particular—as models of how to respond when an outbreak occurs.

We also experienced an incredible spirit of aloha. Union Church has folks involved in the emergency response team, and people across the town stepping up in other needs. Groceries are being delivered and neighbors are (safely) checking in on neighbors.

While the road to recovery has begun, the journey remains long. Most positive cases are emerging from isolation before Thanksgiving, and others who were exposed are starting to leave quarantine. Maui county has moved us from Stay at Home to Safer at Home, loosening some of the restrictions. But challenges remain. People who tested positive, even after isolation will still test positive for weeks to come. This means no shopping trips to Maui—an essential way to stock up at lower prices. Our school remains all virtual, exposing challenges of the digital divide within the community.

Even with these challenges, we continue to praise God, who has seen us through our past struggles and promises that troubles don't last always. The providence of God continues to shine brightly on us and calls us to the ongoing work of love and care for one another.



## Conference News and Highlights



### Pastoral Transitions

**David Leong** concluded his interim ministry as Pastor of Wai'oli Hui'ia Church on August 31.



### Service of Installation

**Rennie Mau** was installed as Pastor and Teacher of Ewa Community Church in a virtual service on November 15.



**Joseph Medlin** began his ministry as Pastor of Hilo Coast United Church of Christ on October 1.



### Service of Ordination and Installation

**Arthur Manulani "Manu" Naeole, Jr.**, was ordained and installed as Kahu of Kalihi and Moanalua Church on November 22.

### Conference Staff Transition

**Dorothy Lester**, former Associate Conference Minister, has come out of retirement to re-join the Conference Staff as an Interim Associate Conference Minister.



**Robin Lunn** concluded her ministry as Pastor of Makawao Union Church on October 18. She has relocated to the continent.

## Conference Calendar of Events

### DECEMBER 24 - 25

Christmas Holiday (Office Closed)

### JANUARY 1, 2021

New Year's Holiday (Office Closed)

### JANUARY 18

Martin Luther King, Jr., Day (Office Closed)

### FEBRUARY 6

Conference Council

### FEBRUARY 12

Furlough Day (Office Closed)

### FEBRUARY 15

Presidents' Day (Office Closed)

### Save the Dates!!

### 199TH 'AHA PAE'ĀINA:

**JUNE 13 - 19, 2021**

The 199th 'Aha Pae'āina, the annual meeting of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ, will be held virtually June 13 - 19, 2021. More details will be coming soon!

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, 1848 Nu'uuanu Avenue, Honolulu, HI, 96817.

December 2020

KA PAPA HO'OLĀLĀ 

## Reconciliation and Forgiveness Reach beyond Samoa

TO'O'OLEFUA PAOGOFIE, PASTOR, NU'U LOTU CHURCH

Within our cultural framework of non-violence, Samoans find a way to reach reconciliation and forgiveness—*ifoga*, which restores and perpetuates harmony and respect among concerned parties. The root word *ifo*, means to bow down. In our Samoan customs, is a way of showing respect and honor to our elders, parents, paramount chiefs, special guests, and visitors. It shows humility and respect. It is a traditional and physical ritual apology in which a guilty party demonstrates remorse by begging forgiveness.

In 2007, just after the killing of a Samoan boy at Kuhio Park Terrace by a Micronesian boy, I learned that retaliation from the Samoans was on the horizon. Although it was a challenge, I gathered both sides for reconciliation. On Saturday, January 12, I

spoke on behalf of our Micronesian brothers and sisters. It was such an overwhelming and valiant effort for both communities, a rare display of genuine forgiveness which came from the heart. The event ended up on the front page of the paper on Sunday morning.\* On that Saturday morning, realizing their connectedness, two cultures found the spirit of love in the midst of darkness. Tears started to flow. Amazingly, Jesus' spirit of love and forgiveness ruled the day.

As a Christian, a Samoan, and a Pacific Islander, I believe a very sad event should never be an excuse for any community to vilify another. For me, retaliation, or speaking disparagingly of others, is never a Samoan way. This story about *ifoga* is not to glorify any one culture. *Ifoga* is

still practiced throughout Samoa and is continuing to bring healing among hurting communities outside our islands.

Jesus did the most powerful *ifoga* for the sin of the world. Jesus' *ifoga* is the only *ifoga* that can bring authentic reconciliation, healing, and love. In these most challenging and unprecedented times, may we continue to seek, find, live, and abide in the Spirit of *ifoga*.

\*See: Honolulu Advertiser, *Lee Cataluna*, January 13, 2008

