

HAWAII CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# The Friend



The Oldest Newspaper West Of The Rocky Mountains | Founded 1843 | Volume 37, Issue 4 | October 2021



ONE 'OHANA

UNIFIED • RADIANT • TRANSFORMING





Faith Action living wage rally

## What Would Justice Do?

FOO PHAM, CHURCH OF THE CROSSROADS MODERATOR AND FAITH ACTION HOUSINGNOW! CHAIR

“WWJD: What would Jesus do? (Christians) don’t want to know so they can do it, they want to know so they can tell other people to do it.” These are the convicting words of late comedian George Carlin. The ‘WWJD’ mantra and Carlin’s perspective can be interpreted multiple ways. Sometimes it’s a reflection on the choices we make that affect us, sometimes it’s a reflection on the choices we make in how we treat others.



One that is clear to me is that Jesus has a heart for the least among us and directs us to show compassion, mercy, and love to others with the understanding that faith without works is dead. For many churches and ministries, that manifests itself in charity work to alleviate human suffering and poverty by providing direct services. Faith Action for Community Equity offered something different: an opportunity to take the mission of the church one step further by seeking systematic changes.

You’re probably familiar with the saying, “Give a person a fish and they will eat for a day; teach a person to fish and they will eat for a lifetime.”

That’s great, but what if the waters are overfished? What if the best place to catch the fish is only accessible by boat? What if you need a fishing/boating license? What if there’s a schedule for the boats and certain fishers get priority during the times of abundance? What if the person you taught to fish can’t afford a boat? You could pose hundreds more questions like these. The point is that in an imperfect world with generations creating civilizations and systems, fallible humans can intentionally and unintentionally create systems of oppression.

For the sake of word count, I’m going to jump ahead to the point in which we agree that these systems exist. While you may not be responsible for the creation of unjust systems, you can act to change them. There is a place for service-oriented ministry. Charity work is necessary because there are people with immediate needs whom we, the church, are called to serve. However, why not simultaneously change the systems that make our charity work necessary in the first place? This is what it means to live out justice-minded faith.

We all have unique talents, experiences, and interests—you could even call these spiritual gifts. We should take these gifts and put them to use as we feel called. Maybe you have the writing ability, speaking ability, and/or time to rise to action when Faith Action asks you to testify to the gatekeepers of the systems (usually but not always, the government).

Maybe you also feel called to join a Faith Action task force and do the organizing necessary to effect change. Maybe you can identify other methods of living out justice-minded faith that better fit your spiritual gifts.

As Christians, we have been called to act and love in many ways. The one that has resonated with me the most in my life for the past two years, as an active participant and leader within Faith Action for Community Equity, has been the call to act justly.

See: <https://www.faithactionhawaii.org/>.

Read Foo’s full article at [hcucc.org/the-friend-oct-2021](http://hcucc.org/the-friend-oct-2021).



God is still speaking

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# Top Ten Tips for Avoiding Copyright Infringement

HEATHER KIMMEL, GENERAL COUNSEL, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

- Remember that copyright infringement is 100% preventable.
- Owning a copy of the work doesn't give you the right to copy a work!
- Purchase the appropriate blanket license or licenses for your church's music licensing needs and follow the terms of those licenses.
- Be cautious and attentive to licensing concerns when considering use of videos.
- Contact authors or publishers to obtain licenses to use poetry, speeches, or other literature in your worship services and other events, whether in-person or live-streamed.
- Do not post photographs that

you find on the internet on your church's website. Use photographs that are owned by the church. Keeping infringing materials off your website and social media platforms is one of the best ways to reduce your risk of infringement.

- Hyperlinking on websites and in emails and using the share functions on social media are ways to share the works of others without copyright infringement. Don't copy and paste!
- Attribution is necessary when using the works of others, but not enough to avoid infringement. Get a license.
- Do not ignore a takedown notice or you might waive important rights.

- Remember that compensation for use of a creative work is a justice issue.



Excerpted from *Copyright Compliance: What Churches Need to Know*, by Heather Kimmel.

Heather presented a webcast for the Insurance Board recently on "Copyright Concerns for Ministries." Find a link to a recording of her timely presentation on the Insurance Board website, [www.insuranceboard.org/online-learning/](http://www.insuranceboard.org/online-learning/), under "General Safety." This is information every church and pastor need to know.

# Rooted in Love on a Country Farm

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

On a recent trip to Molokai I saw a bumper sticker that said, "Don't change Molokai. Let Molokai change you." It's a perfect statement

that gets at the heart of popular feelings there. My experience living and working at Mohala Farms these last 16 years is closely connected to that

bumper sticker's mana'o: it's not just the outward things that an organic farm can do positively for the world that is important, the transformation that is most important is the one that takes place inwardly. We need to be changed. Transformation of our world begins within. When we become more strongly rooted in a way of seeing and being in the world that is deeply fulfilling and empowering, what we do and how we do things will follow course.

Perhaps living and working on a farm out in the country is akin to the Bible's repeated theme of returning "to the wilderness." The wilderness is the place to strip one's self away from both our creature comforts and endless distractions and to re-connect with God in a more primal, primordial



Mohala Farms

... continued on page 7



## Medical Debt Relief in Hawai'i

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

A church never raises money for its own sake. A church raises funds in order to continue the ministry of Jesus in our corner of the world and in our time. The proposed capital campaign that we are now working toward is composed of many missional goals and promises. It also asks that 10% of the funds raised go to purchase medical debt for citizens of the state.

Medical debt weighs on both the medical community and on those who struggle to pay it off. In the health community, medical debt sometime takes years and even decades to collect. As a result, hospitals and doctors' offices will sell the debt to third-party collection agencies at steeply discounted prices in order to remove it from their books.<sup>i</sup>

Since medical debt passes through many hands, from the point of origin to the secondary debt market, those who struggle to pay medical bills face damage to credit scores and other issues, especially when seeking a loan. It is common for medical debt to be the occasion for declaring personal bankruptcy. At times an accident leaves a person unable to work for a significant amount of time, or a long-term illness leads to financial instability.<sup>ii</sup>

A 2019 study indicated that 40%

of working-age people in the United States, or 72 million people, have medical debt

they struggle with. That number is up from 34% in 2005.<sup>iii</sup>

Another 2019 credit report indicates that in Hawai'i there was approximately \$108 million in medical debt<sup>iv</sup> representing 105,289 individuals or 13.4% of the adult population in Hawai'i.<sup>v</sup>

To date the United Church of Christ, as a whole, has abolished \$67 million in medical debt.<sup>vi</sup>

It is our goal, through the capital campaign, to help address this issue here in Hawai'i so that we might live fully into the call of Jesus to touch and transform the lives of those around us.



<sup>i</sup> "This Oahu man has a plan to pay off a lot of people's medical debt," *Honolulu Civil Beat*  
<sup>ii</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>iii</sup> "The states where people have the most unpaid medical bills," *Resolve* ([helloresolve.com](http://helloresolve.com))

<sup>iv</sup> "This Oahu Man . . .," *Honolulu Civil Beat*

<sup>v</sup> "How many people in your state are burdened with medical debt?" Page 4, 24/7 *Wall St.* ([247wallst.com](http://247wallst.com))

<sup>vi</sup> "UCC donors fund seventh medical debt buy, abolishing \$1.3 million in three states" *United Church of Christ News*

## Patrick Duggan, Executive Director, UCC Church Building & Loan Fund, addresses medical debt:

When most pundits and politicians talk about reasons that 48 percent of Americans live at or below the poverty

line, they typically place the blame on the laziness, irresponsibility, lack of education, lack of initiative, high crime rates and low moral character

of poor people. Such arguments do not find culpability in a history of government policy—like redlining or over-policing—or selective disinvestment in poor communities. Rarely, if ever, is poverty attributed to the modern-day peonage of medical debt, which most Americans fear more than serious illness. Medical debt is a double-edged sword that not only creates an insurmountable financial burden for millions of Americans, but also forces poor people to choose between paying for housing, food, or for a hospital bill.... The facts are alarming: Medical debt is the top reason that Americans are in contact with debt collectors.

Excerpt from *United Church of Christ News*, "Commentary: The modern-day peonage of medical debt," November 5, 2019. Read the entire article at <https://www.ucc.org/commentary-the-modern-day-peonage-of-medical-debt/>.



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# Steeplejacking: Taking Churches Away from Our Denomination

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Scenario:** A church called a pastor who did not have standing in the United Church of Christ (UCC), although the church itself had always been a part of the UCC and the membership was happy with the UCC. Over a period of years, the pastor began to consolidate control over the church by bringing in new members who did not have a history with the UCC or its congregational traditions and beliefs. The pastor and new members made a series of changes to the church bylaws, gradually transforming the polity of the church from a congregational form to more of a hierarchical form, with fewer people required to make changes. The membership began to change, and the long-time UCC members became a minority. Eventually, all key decisions under the church bylaws were vested in a board appointed by the pastor. The pastor began to make donations of church assets to a different denomination. Soon, under the pastor's guidance, the church formally withdrew from membership in the UCC, taking with it a valuable church sanctuary, campus, cemetery, and land. The minority of members who did not want to withdraw fought the majority, and objected to the loss of the property which had been in the UCC and its congregational organizations for generations. Because the property was owned by the church corporation, and the process of amending the bylaws and withdrawal followed proper corporate form and procedure, the minority did not prevail and the church was lost to the UCC.

**Discussion:** Because of the nature of our polity in the UCC, which respects local church autonomy, local churches can withdraw from the denomination (just as they elect to join). Members invest their time and resources in the ministry of a church with the understanding that its identity, purposes, history, and traditions are at one with being in covenantal partnership in the UCC. People work hard at stewarding the church, donating time, money, and property in expectation that the church as they know it will remain part of the ministry of the UCC. If a church ceases to be in the UCC,

this breaks covenant with many members who have worked for years to preserve the church as part of the UCC and separates church families from their religious history.

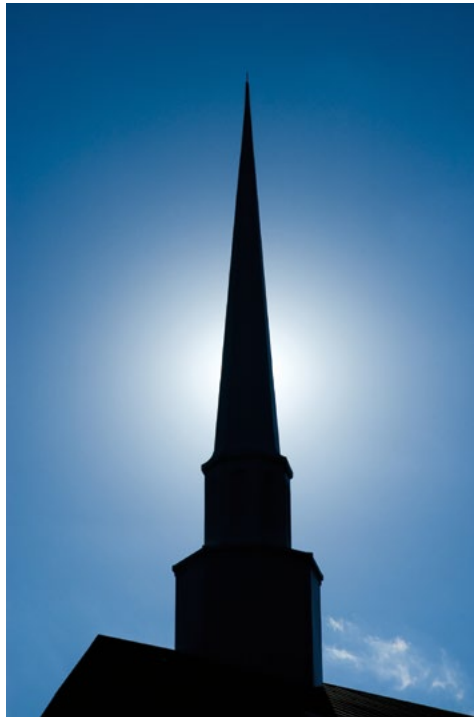
**The question arises: how can a congregation keep its property as a part of the United Church of Christ even if the congregation ceases to exist or if it takes on an identity different from what its identity and historic relationship has been?** Here are some things your church might consider

to protect the church and its property if this question is a concern for you:

## Be Attentive to Early Signs that a Denominational Split Might Occur.

The following situations could be seen as an attempt at separating the congregation from the United Church of Christ:

1. Failure to participate in the life and programs of the Association and the Conference;
2. Calling of a pastor who is neither recognized by, nor has ministerial standing with the UCC, and is not willing to obtain such standing;
3. A growing number of people joining the church who do not agree with the ministry of the church;
4. Refusal to bear the name, the "United Church of Christ";
5. Failure to continue to share in the larger mission program of the UCC through Our Church's Wider Mission;
6. Failing to file a report for *Yearbook and Directory* of the United Church of Christ for multiple consecutive years;
7. Clear reduction, elimination, or departure from the established history and traditions of the UCC, especially those traditions which are congregational in nature;
8. Actions which appear to be aimed at diverting assets and property away from the church or the UCC and their shared mission.



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... continued on page 6

... Steeplejacking: Taking Churches Away from Our Denomination, continued from page 5

## Keep in Touch with Fellow Members and Discuss the Issue.

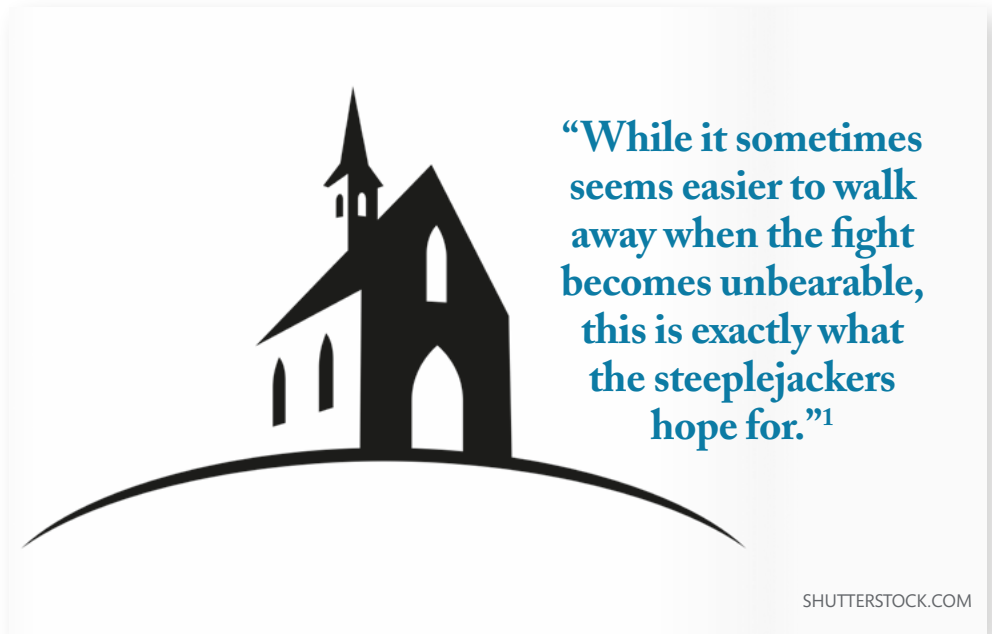
Regular communication with members and awareness of the concern is important. Often the congregation is not focused on this issue, and doesn't react until it is too late. As Sheldon Culver and John Dorhauer write: "Open debate is good, secrecy and stealth are not." "While it sometimes seems easier to walk away when the fight becomes unbearable, this is exactly what the steeplejackers hope for."<sup>1</sup> Members should also be encouraged to learn about and engage in the larger life of the Association and Conference so there is an understanding of the UCC and how and why the church covenants with the UCC as a whole.

**Restricted Gifting:** Gifts of real estate, personal property, and funds by members or other parties may be made to the church on the condition that the gifts may be used only so long as the church maintains its standing in the UCC. Large gifts toward endowment and gifts of real estate are often made with such conditions and must be held and used for the stated purposes of the gift.

**Bylaw Amendments:** Your church bylaws may be amended to help cement the relationship with the UCC. The most important rules for governance of the church should be in the bylaws. Bylaws are more difficult to amend than general policies and guidelines, and to amend bylaws, a vote of the church membership as a whole is typically required, especially in churches that embrace a congregational tradition. Some amendments to consider:

- Require the pastor to have or obtain standing in the UCC and maintain that standing;
- Require the pastor to keep up with continuing professional education offered by the UCC;
- Require supermajority congregational vote to withdraw from the UCC; and
- Specify that upon dissolution of the church entity, the church property must remain in the UCC.

**Create Restrictive Covenants:** Recognizing that bylaws made one day could be undone by the same process another day, some churches might consider a more permanent solution to ensure that the church property is kept for



use by a church with membership in the UCC. To do so, a church can adopt and record a restrictive covenant and/or a reversionary clause in a deed or declaratory instrument covenanting that the church property must continue to be used for a church with membership in the UCC.

**Transfer of Title to a Trust or to another UCC Entity:** Another permanent solution is to create a trust for the church property and convey the church property to a trustee to hold for the benefit of the church so long as the church continues to have membership in the UCC. The Hawaii Conference Foundation presently holds title in trust for many local churches.

**Legal Oversight.** Where there is malfeasance and serious mismanagement of church property by a director or directors of an incorporated church, legal review should be sought, as there may be remedies available at law. A church board member may seek court review of the conduct of other board members if there is evidence of malfeasance. Also, since incorporated churches are treated as public charities under the law, the State Attorney General has oversight over the fiduciary affairs of the church and may step in to remove a malfeasant director or to remedy the situation if the misconduct is reported.

Please consult with your church's legal counsel if more information or assistance is needed with respect to these matters.

<sup>1</sup>Sheldon Culver and John Dorhauer: *Steeplejacking: How the Christian Right Is Hijacking Mainstream Religion*, 2007, Ig Publishing, p.160, p.147.





Youth from Church of the Crossroads prepare food for the Institute for Human Services



Waialua UCC hula ministry



HCUCC Disaster Ministries holds a food distribution event at Pearl City Community Church



Aletha Kaohi and her granddaughter, Wailenalena Kaohi, during the blessing of a new columbarium in Waimea UCC's cemetery



Hawaii Kai UCC Praise Band



Filipino UCC celebrates its 2021 summer reading program



Maui Evangelical Church celebrates its 55th anniversary



UCC Judd Street celebrates communion drive-through style!



... Rooted in Love on a Country Farm, continued from page 3

way. And so Molokai is symbolic of the wilderness — it has the power to change you. In a small, kipuka kind of way, a 6-acre organic farm can also be a place of wilderness.

When I first moved out to the farm, it was just weeds. There was no electricity, no water, no toilet. Those things took months to set up. In the meantime, the night sky was my TV screen

with thrilling new shows every 24 hours. Bright moon shadows during the full moons. Complete darkness during the new moon phase. For this Kaimuki boy, it was a revelation.

We are so easily rooted in a materialistic and individualistic way of life, in our political ideologies and nationalistic identities and all kinds of stresses and anxieties that our world

is embedded in and perpetuates. God liberates us from these lifeless growing conditions and renews us with living water and living soil. And the traditional place to find this is in the wilderness, where God's love flows deeply through creation.

Find more of Mark's reflections at [hcucc.org/the-friend-oct-2021](http://hcucc.org/the-friend-oct-2021).



## General Synod 33: Recap

The 2021 Special Edition General Synod, which ran from July 11–July 18, offered something for everyone, and accomplished many “firsts.” It was the first-ever General Synod to be held entirely online. There were 2,596 registered attendees, of which 715 were voting delegates. During the week prior to the start of Synod, 50 workshops on a wide range of topics were offered. Most events occurred in the latter part of the day, Eastern Time, to accommodate those in other time zones and allow more people from across the country to watch live and be involved.

Some highlights included:

Three worship services featuring many creative elements, new music, and dynamic preachers.

Ella Anderson, Kapa‘a United Church of Christ, was one of the youth who were part of the theological reflection offered at the end of the first day of Synod.

Two keynote speakers, Valarie Kaur and Adam Russell Taylor, challenged and inspired attendees with their revolutionary ideas and passion.

Traci Blackmon, Associate General Minister for Justice and

Local Church Ministries, was reelected to a second four-year term. She was affirmed by 96 percent of Synod’s voting delegates.

Conference Minister David Popham was among the new Conference Ministers welcomed by the denomination since the last General Synod in 2019.

The Three Great Loves campaign, which had been the focus over the last four years, came to an end at this General Synod and a new initiative, “Join the Movement Toward Racial Justice,” will be the focus for the next biennium.

The Hawai‘i Conference had 11 delegates and one Associate Delegate present throughout General Synod.

A number of resolutions were passed by delegates, including:

- Declaring and responding to racism as a public health crisis.
- Supporting the United Nations International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024).
- Becoming a Church of Contemporaries in Action.
- Encouraging to end “128 years of war” between the U.S. and the Hawaiian Kingdom.
- Promoting gender safety and equity for women and other persons who are subjected to harassment and

discrimination in ministry based on gender orientation.

- Urging reform of the cash bail system to eliminate racial and social injustice inherent in the present system.

- Calling for a just peace between Palestine and Israel and decrying oppression of Palestinian people as a matter of faith.

- Recognizing the Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ as a formal Self-Created Group.

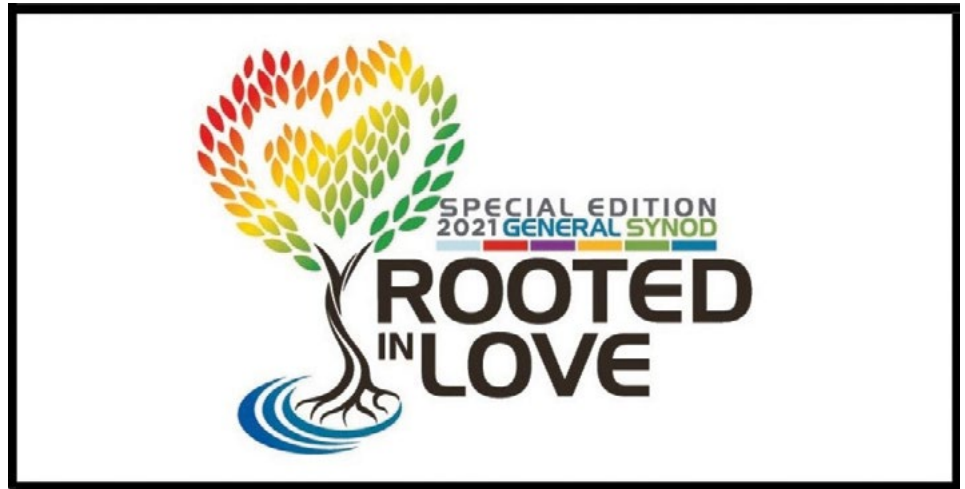
- Condemning conversion therapy, a medical practice that attempts to “cure” the sexual or gender identity of LGBTQ individuals, and urging local churches and members to work toward a ban on the practices.

- Honoring “the ecological principle that the Rights of Nature supersede harmful and destructive property rights.”

- Protecting workers at churches and other religious institutions.

These resolutions are now in the hands of their respective implementation committees for further action.

You can read the complete resolutions as passed, along with other news from General Synod 33, at <https://www.generalsynod.org/final-resolution-as-adopted-by-general-synod-33/>.



Thursdays in Black—HCUC's delegation to General Synod



## Advocating for and Ministering to Our Youth in “Coronatide”

LAUREN BUCK MEDEIROS, CHAPLAIN, PUNAHOU SCHOOL

There isn't a youth worker (or pastoral staff or parent) alive who isn't struggling to define their role in the ongoing challenges of advocating for and ministering to our youth in this seemingly endless season of “Coronatide.” How do we keep connected in this time when our usual “connections” continue to be difficult and even dangerous? Even with an akamai digital generation, just how many Zooms, texts or phone calls can replace the joy of in-person youth meetings, camps, service projects, overnights or cookouts—especially when the adults feel clueless, helpless and weary? Are our youth also weary of screens for school, for church, for friendship, and even connecting with trusted adults in our churches? It is undeniable that our young people need us in new and evolving AND VITAL ways ... but how? Especially as the pandemic drags on beyond the “finish line” that we were all hoping and praying to reach before the Delta variant tacked on its own brand of EXTRA. One friend characterized this challenge as a marathon we've run ... but the last mile feels possible because we're nearing the end ... ONLY to approach the finish line and suddenly, the finish line has moved! It extends so far into the distance, we don't even KNOW how much longer we have to run,

swim, bike, plod, or crawl. Ah, but crawling puts us on our knees, and that's a great place to pray, yes?

SO, with the collective prayers of our faith communities, local church, Mokupuni and Conference, here are a couple of crazy ideas that I offer as a humble water station while we turn the corner and keep going:

- Plan an “around the house” picture scavenger hunt. This can be “live” on a (recorded) Zoom meeting—or something you circulate to be done on their own time. Maybe end the list with “where I see God.” Then compile and share a collage or clip in a future worship Zoom ... (“low tech” version: include their ideas in a spoken prayer for worship.) There are many indoor scavenger hunt ideas you can find online including this one: <https://www.thirtyhandmadedays.com/indoor-scavenger-hunt-ideas/>.



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.

- Thanksgiving Lunchbox affirmations (here's something that can involve members of your congregation): Either randomly assign youth names to non-related adults – OR give the whole youth list to several adults; then invite those church members to write a personal note of gratitude for each youth ... then get those notes to parents/caregivers to secretly place in students' lunchbox or backpack—or on the mirror where they brush their teeth in the morning ... somewhere they will FIND it on maybe the Monday of Thanksgiving week.

Lauren sent us SEVEN creative ideas – so watch future HCUCC publications for more of her ideas to use in your setting!

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



Remembering an earlier time when we could gather for in-person youth activities

## News from our Associations and Affiliates

### Hawai'i Conference Welcomes Two New Part-Time ACMs

The Hawai'i Conference is pleased to welcome two new part-time Associate Conference Ministers to our 'ohana! Valerie Ross is deployed to Kaua'i and began serving in this position on September 7. Jonathan Roach, who lives on Hawai'i Island, began serving on October 1.

*The Friend* asked them to share a bit about themselves so we can get to know them beyond their degrees and work in the church. Meet Valerie and Jonathan!



**Valerie Ross**

"In addition to my life project around Social Ethics and Liberation Theologies, I am a lover of enjoying all that life offers in many ways.

"Here are a few things about me:

"I am a lover of books on any number of subjects. I enjoy visiting art galleries and museums, and seeing films.

"I enjoy participating in several sports and attending sports events.

"I enjoy cooking and exploring cuisines from different cultures. To this day Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown* remains one of my favorite television series.

"I am also a lover of music: gospel, jazz, classical and other genres."

#### **Jonathan Roach**



"Beyond my work history and educational history, I am a husband of Rev. Jihey Esther Roach, who is a UCC clergyperson serving as the Bereavement Coordinator with Hawai'i Care Choices (Hospice of Hilo); a father of Enye Grace Roach, who is a 3rd grader at Connections Public Charter School in Hilo; and the son and grandson of clergy. We live in Kea'au.

"I love books and reading—not just theology books but novels, cookbooks, nature books . . . and more and more. My family worries that I might have a book addiction. I have spent almost two years

as the Branch Manager of the public libraries in Honoka'a and Laupahoehoe.

"On the cooking front, I am well-loved for my slow smoked pulled pork butt, but if I am coming over to your house for lunch and you want to make me a very, very happy person, some sizzling hot kalbi with a side of kimchi fried rice (runny egg over it, please) will get you a huge smile.

"I love nature, as anyone who has had to listen to me preach knows, especially birds. In the evening, I love just sitting on my lanai and saying thank you to the birds who visit my garden. I am an avid gardener: veggies, flowers, and tropical fruit trees. I keep heritage breed chickens and hope my neighbors enjoy waking up at sunrise to the chorus of my two roosters, Jumbo and Redhead, as I do. I raise tilapia in my pond, but my daughter is firmly against eating them.

"My favorite beach is Hapuna and my favorite hiking is the Kaūmana Trail off the Saddle Road. I am a member of Church of the Holy Cross in Hilo and love great preaching . . . I have been wondering if we should celebrate a great sermon like we celebrate a winning touchdown with a cooler of ice-water over the preacher's head. What do you think? Hawai'i, both our state and my beloved home island, have taught me so much over the years that I have been blessed to live here, and I look forward to learning so much from the people and the 'aina for years and decades to come. Aloha nui!"

We are so glad to have you, Valerie and Jonathan, as part of our Hawai'i Conference staff!

### Associations Gather for Fall Mokupuni

- O'ahu Association: October 9
- Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC): October 16
- Hawai'i Island Association: November 6
- Kaua'i Association: November 7
- Tri-Isle Association: Pending

For registration information, contact your respective Associations.



# Conference News and Highlights

Go to [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

## Pastoral Transitions



**Joseph Medlin** concluded his ministry as Pastor of Hilo Coast United Church of Christ on July 18. He and his family have relocated to the continent.



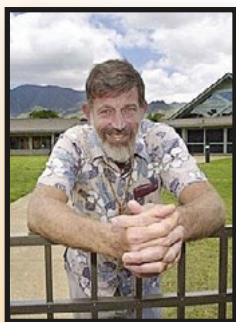
**Jun Lagon** concluded his ministry as Pastor of Filipino United Church of Christ on July 19. He has relocated to California.



**John Heidel**, retired minister, has voluntarily resigned his ministerial standing in the United Church of Christ as a part of his ongoing spiritual journey.

## In Memory

**Tulilele Faasafua Amosa**, 53, pastor of Savali Ole Filemu (Message of Peace) Church, died on August 8. He was born in American Samoa. A memorial service was held on September 11.



**Davis D. Milotta**, 68, retired pastor, passed away on September 9. He previously served Pearl Harbor Memorial UCC, Koloa Union Church, and Waialua UCC. He celebrated his 40th anniversary of ordination in 2018 at the 196th 'Aha Pae'aina. He is survived by his wife, Sandy, son David Makana Milotta, daughter-in-law Veronica, daughter Dr. Lorin Shellenberger, four grandsons, and one granddaughter. Plans for a memorial service are pending.

**Lu'uga Vailu'u**, 90, Senior Pastor, Crystal of Salvation Church, died in September. He was ordained in the Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (EFKAS) in 1981. He founded or helped found several churches, including Messenger of Peace Church; First Samoan Congregational Christian Church, EFKAS/UCC; and Crystal of Salvation Church, UCC. He is survived by his wife, Lila Vailu'u. Plans for a memorial service are pending. (Photo not available)

## Conference Calendar of Events

### OCTOBER 9

O'ahu Association Fall Mokupuni (virtual)

### OCTOBER 16

Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) Fall 'Aha Halawai (virtual)

### OCTOBER 23

HCUCC Committee on Ministry Workshop

### OCTOBER 30

State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches

### NOVEMBER 6

Hawai'i Island Association Fall Mokupuni

### NOVEMBER 7

Kaua'i Association Fall Mokupuni (Virtual)

### NOVEMBER 25 - 26

Thanksgiving Holiday (Office Closed)

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.

October 2021

GIFTS AND WISDOM OF THE NEXT GENERATION

## Do You Want to Be a Redshirt?

BEN SHEETS, PASTOR, LANĀ'I UNION CHURCH

When Vacation Bible School was announced at Lānaʻi Union Church this summer, middle and high school students were invited to be leaders.



At first, many were a little hesitant. But when one youth remembered the leaders from Nuʻuanu Congregational Church's internship program, they became excited and exclaimed, "We're going to be the redshirts!" referring to the color-coded shirts the

interns wore in previous years.

Beginning in 2011, Nuʻuanu Congregational Church partnered with Lānaʻi Union Church to provide Vacation Bible School with the hope that new leaders from Lānaʻi Union Church would be encouraged and raised up to lead this ministry. COVID-19 restrictions made that happen.

Through the hard and faithful work of a handful of adults and 15 youth leaders, Lānaʻi Union Church held an exciting VBS this summer with 25-30 elementary age students daily. Through song, story, crafts, and games, the love of God in Jesus for the world was shared.

Afterwards, some of the youth leaders were asked what the best and most difficult parts about being a leader were. The best parts were

"teaching the kids new things," "just being there and learning more about God," and "getting to lead the little ones." The most difficult part was "controlling (the kids); they were a little crazy," and "making the kids listen." When asked if they were that challenging in previous years, one student answered with a wry smile, "Yeah, we were that crazy."

The seeds of this ministry and partnership that have been planted over the past 10 years by numerous interns and nurtured by the Spirit, are now reaping a harvest here on Lānaʻi.

Blessed are the crazy ones, the energetic ones, the excited ones, for they will lead the Church.

