

TO: Council Members of the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ  
FR: Cynthia Scherr, Scherr Management Consulting  
RE: Summary of 195<sup>th</sup> 'Aha Pae'aina Plenary Sessions  
DT: June 16-17, 2017

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The 2017-18 strategic planning process of the Hawai'i Conference of the United Church of Christ began with three plenary sessions at the 195<sup>th</sup> 'Aha Pae'aina. The intention of these sessions was to "set the table" for strategic planning, which will begin in earnest after an Interim Conference Minister is appointed. Ideas and feedback from the plenary sessions will inform both the content and process of the ongoing planning effort.

Themes and focus questions for the three plenary sessions included:

- Prayer: How will we begin our *spiritual* strategic journey?
- Exploration: How will we listen for God's vision for the Conference?
- Common Understanding: What is strategic planning anyway?
- Relevance: How will our plan be infused with the Spirit, meaningful and practical?
- Mission: What is the HCUCC sent into the world to do?

### **Prayer**

Participants discussed the qualities of God's presence that they experience personally and that reflect their deepest desires and longings for the Conference. Some of the adjectives people used included *big and generous, connection, unconditional love, opportunity, boundless, shepherd, surprise, clarity, aggressive, willing to call us out, mystery, patience, joyful, transcendent and still speaking.*

Small groups then composed prayers for strategic planning which Ken Makuakane synthesized into one prayer set to music. We will incorporate these prayers in our planning sessions throughout the year.

### **Exploration**

The Conference Assessment, completed in February 2017, revealed a hunger for a clearly articulated vision. As an initial exploration into how Conference delegates envision the organization in 2027, small groups brainstormed their hopes for the future. Expansive and futuristic ideas were listed alongside suggestions for tactics. Some divergent views, for example about clergy ordination and the desirability of church growth, will need further exploration. Overall, this work yielded a rich set of images to draw upon as we create the vision.

Emerging elements of vision for the Conference include: a growing and vital church community; involvement of youth in all aspects of leadership and worship; impactful mission work; thriving Hawaiian values and language; accessible professional development for clergy and laity; being a model for equipping congregations; broad support that leads to rich resources; using technology ethically, naturally and efficiently; and being a unified Conference that embraces its diversity. Further work will be done to develop a vision that fulfills the Conference's mission.

## **Common Understanding**

We defined strategic planning terms and appropriate expectations for a plan.

Vision:	A picture of the desired future.
Mission:	Our purpose; what we are sent into the world to do.
Values:	A set of principles and behaviors that we will adhere to as we pursue our mission and vision.
Strategy:	A plan to realize an organization's definition of success.
Progress measures:	Metrics, benchmarks, milestones and other evidence that we are making progress toward our vision.

We also discussed a) mutual responsibility for communication about the plan and the planning process and b) the fact that the process will evolve as new leadership joins the Conference.

## **Relevance**

Delegates shared thoughts about how they believe a Conference strategic plan will be useful to them in various contexts: personally; in their congregations; within associations; and within the Conference. People see value in having a clear mission, vision and goals to provide direction and enable consistent communication in this diverse Conference. Other important benefits include prioritizing resources, improving alignment around common goals, motivating leaders, developing a shared narrative with other congregations, deepening faith and enhancing commitment to the Conference.

## **Mission**

Very few delegates were familiar with the mission statement as adopted by the 'Aha Pae'aina in 2002<sup>1</sup>. A key verb in that mission statement is *connect*, which is one of the major functions of the Conference. We discussed the many ways in which we connect now, through the associations, gatherings, publications, mission work committees and leadership workshops. Hopes for what will connect the conference in the future were broader and more ambitious in scope, including: staying connected to the mission statement and strategic plan; having a spiritual and professional development learning center; exercising leadership in justice and witness issues; engaging in broad-based partnerships; increasing connections to the wider UCC community and drawing upon "outside" spiritual development resources.

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<sup>1</sup> Mission statement as adopted in 2002: The role and mission of the HCUCC is to connect our churches, associations and other church groupings in covenant relationship and to equip, support and facilitate our formation as sign, foretaste and instrument of the reign of God by being:

- Learning and discerning communities of faith,
- Worshipping communities of praise and thanksgiving,
- Caring communities of love and compassion,
- Reconciling communities of forgiveness, healing and wholeness,
- Witnessing communities seeking peace, justice and the integrity of creation.

## **Summary**

We have rich and meaningful material from the three plenary sessions at the 195<sup>th</sup> 'Aha Pae'aina with which to begin our strategic planning work. Each of the summary paragraphs above was distilled from pages of faithful reflection, lively examples and collective thinking about future direction. Next steps will proceed once new leadership is in place.