

## Conference Minister Departs, Search Begins

**C**harles Buck will resign as Conference Minister of the Hawai'i Conference on July 4, 2017, to relocate with his family outside Hawai'i.

In his resignation letter to the Conference Council, and sent to churches throughout the Conference, he explained that his wife, Susan, was offered a new position that would require her to be based in California.

"After much thought and prayer, and with faith in God, we have decided that she should accept this important opportunity in her career."

The Conference Council has appointed a committee to begin the search for an intentional interim conference minister. The committee of seven—one each from the five associations, State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches and Hawai'i Conference Foundation Trustees—is chaired by David Iha (Lihu'e Christian Church, Kaua'i), who is also vice-chair of the Council. Assisting the committee is a consultant from the Office of the General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Charles came to Hawai'i from California in 1996 to serve as pastor of United Church of Christ—Judd Street in Honolulu after serving churches in Northern California. He was called as Conference Minister in 2004.

Although the Conference Council and Charles initially agreed on an earlier date for Charles' last day on the job, the Council, meeting in April, asked Charles to stay through July 4 in order to be present at both the 'Aha Pae'aina and General Synod, meetings of the Hawai'i Conference and United Church of Christ, respectively.

## Event Draws Church Leaders Throughout Hawai'i

**W**hy should the church care about social media?

"On Facebook alone, there are 1.86 billion reasons," stated Eric Anderson, Pastor of Church of the Holy Cross, during his plenary address at the Church Leaders Event held at Central Union Church on February 25. "That is the number of people who log into the service at least once a month around the world."

Speaking to nearly two hundred event participants, Eric explained that historically the church has capitalized on every available communications technology to fulfill its evangelical mission. We are called, he said, to continue this legacy in the digital era.

Four communications tools are as essential to today's church as letters were to the Apostle Paul two millennia ago, said Eric. They are websites, church Facebook pages, Facebook accounts for pastors, and smartphones.

"Every church needs a Facebook page—not so that we can evangelize through it, but so that our members can link back to it as they do the work of the evangelist," he said, stressing that person-to-person evangelism, not evangelism by churches, works best on social media.

He noted that having a church Facebook page can also benefit the existing church community. It offers the possibility of live streaming sermons, hosting online Bible studies and discussion groups, promoting events, increasing public awareness of your church, and more.

To support his notion that every pastor should have a Facebook presence, Eric testified that "some of the best evangelism work I have done in my life has been to be an obvious committed Christian in public." Every Christian, including lay members, can do this via social media.

Eric also implored pastors to utilize smartphones because they afford the best chance of communicating via a medium that people feel comfortable with, and he strongly advised churches to establish websites because phonebooks are obsolete "and people want to learn more about your church than its address."

*(continued on page 5)*



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## Certainty and Ministry

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

A retiring grad school professor, whose course I took on the Hebrew Bible, said that as a young scholar and minister he thought he knew exactly what the scriptures said and how they ought to be interpreted. But with age came less certainty, he said, as he read the scriptures again and became more aware of, and awed by, new and deeper meanings being constantly revealed.



I am not yet retiring from ministry, but I can already appreciate what my professor was saying, not just about scriptures, but about doing God's work. After twenty years of ministry in Hawai'i, thirteen of them as your conference minister, I will leave with much less certainty about how we are supposed to do God's work and much more awareness of, and awe at, how God is working in so many amazing and miraculous ways.

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*In the first year of my conference ministry, I would visit a church, sit in worship, look around, and know instantly what this church needed to improve upon its mission and ministries.*

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In the first year of my conference ministry, I would visit a church, sit in worship, look around, and know instantly what this church needed to improve upon its mission and ministries. But in time this grew tiring and pointless, especially when it was clear that churches were neither expecting nor seeking my expert diagnosis or prescription.

So I stopped analyzing and started experiencing each church on its own terms, accepting each church's unique culture, language, worship style and even peculiarities. In so doing, I developed an appreciation for the way that Christ was present in and working through that church in just the way that that church was meant to do. And I realized the most that I could do, my very purpose as conference minister, was to help equip and resource that church so that it could do the best ministry possible.

Equipping hasn't always been easy. Along the way, I thought it meant focusing most of my attention on the

complainers and critics, those who had problems with their minister, the worship, music, church council, Hawai'i Conference or UCC. But after earnest attempts to spend time with them and listen well, it became clear that any response I had would never mollify or appease them. Being negative was all they knew how to do.

Instead, over time, I discovered there was far more traction and so much more joy and satisfaction obtained by turning instead to the one, more often the few, and not uncommonly the many folks in a church who chose the way of praising God, seeking God's purpose, sharing God's love for all, and living passionately about making God's difference in their communities.

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*I want to say how privileged I have been to serve you and to witness God at work through so many of you in every church.*

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These were folks who knew what was needed: not the busyness of a Martha doing church chores before Jesus, but the business of a Mary, being with Jesus and being Jesus to a world full of need, despair and suffering (Luke 10:38-42).

Folks like these who make Christ come alive have not only inspired awe within me, but fueled my energy and enthusiasm for the equipping ministry of the conference. And they are the reason that I am much less certain today than when I started that the prescription or solution for a diminishing or dying church is yet another SWOT analysis, growth seminar, mission statement re-write or strategic plan development.

Here in this, my last contribution as conference minister to *The Friend*, I want to say how privileged I have been to serve you and to witness God at work through so many of you in every church. You have humbled me and made more real for me than any Sunday sermon or church school class the lesson Jesus taught about what is most important: that we are to love God and our neighbor with all our heart, mind and soul.

Simply that. And on this point, I am certain.



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## Retreat Provides Clergy Rest and Dialogue

Clergy and members in discernment (candidates for ministry) gathered from all the islands in Kailua-Kona in early March for the annual Hawai'i Conference Clergy Retreat. The three-day gathering offered ample opportunities for rest, casual fellowship and a stimulating program facilitated by keynote speaker Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC ecumenical and interfaith officer.



*Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC ecumenical and interfaith officer, was the facilitator at the 2017 Clergy Retreat.*

"Pastoral Care in Multiple Religious Settings" was the topic of this year's retreat, sponsored by the Hawai'i Island Association's Church and Ministry Committee. Karen Georgia, sharing facts, figures and experiences, inspired and challenged participants to consider the idea of "multiple religious belonging" and how more and more people identify with or have roots in more than one religion or form of spirituality. This makes inter-religious dialogue an important skill for faith leaders.

Inter-religious dialogue, she said, goes beyond mutual understanding and good relations. It's also a way for faith leaders to identify causes of tension, often economic, social or political, in our communities; and to break down the barriers which lead to distrust, suspicion and bigotry among religious groups.

She also cautioned that inter-religious dialogue is not brushing aside differences, coming to a common belief, converting the other, or attacking others for their belief or faith.



*Clergy participated in small group discussions throughout the retreat.*

Around tables, clergy discussed questions such as, "How can we be engaged together in community?" "How do we offer pastoral care in multiple religious settings?" And "Is our religious education in churches providing what we need to live in a world of multiple religions?"

Each day began with gifts of worship, prayer and song from Hawai'i Island hosts. Overall, attendees left Kailua-Kona refreshed, enlivened and ready to re-engage in ministry.

## Prayer Moves Keawala'i Members to Justice

How do we act on our faith and practice social justice? Members of a Maui church asked that question and answered it by forming a group committed to peaceful and proactive acts of justice.

Over forty persons from Keawala'i Church in Makena and from the wider community are part of Hui Aloha, which meets weekly to discuss important needs and issues and then set actions that may be taken during the week. Between meetings, they keep in touch through texts, emails and phone to stay current and informed.

Ellen Caringer, founder of Hui Aloha, describes the group as varied. "Some are experienced 'resisters' who have been active in many previous civil rights issues," she said. "Others of us are novices at this, but willing to learn and willing to work. We make regular calls to our legislators on topics related to immigration, health care, LGBT rights, women's rights and environmental issues, among others. It has been heartening that our legislators have been encouraging to us as well and were very supportive of our having formed this group."

The practice of faith is important to Hui Aloha. She said, "We have agreed that we will have daily prayer goals, and agree to start our mornings together in spirit and in prayer as a start to our day. We send out daily mailings with our prayer goal for that day. We firmly believe that faith and works must occur together, and we know when we join together in prayer we can make a remarkable difference."

Pastor Kealahou Alika echoes this sentiment, saying that the group is grounded in prayer. These prayers, he said, are not always explicitly Christian. Some are Jewish, Hindu or Buddhist. But prayers from other traditions help them to be in touch with the broad experience of God in all of God's manifestations.

They encourage other churches to start similar groups as a way of living out the gospel and living into the UCC vision statement recently adopted by the UCC Board: "United in Christ's love, a just world for all."



## Church Leaders Event

Church leaders from throughout the Hawai'i Conference came to the 2017 Church Leaders Event held Saturday, February 25, at Central Union Church. There were nearly 200 people in attendance and the Church Building & Loan Fund co-sponsored the event.



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## Clergy Retreat

The Clergy Retreat, hosted by the Hawai'i Island Association, was held at the Courtyard King Kamehameha Kona Beach Hotel in Kailua-Kona from March 6 to 8. The retreat, "Pastoral Care in Multiple Religious Settings," was led by the Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.





*(Church Leaders, continued from page 1)*

## Delegates Prepare for General Synod

*Below are brief introductions to some of the delegates from the Hawai'i Conference attending the Thirty-first General Synod in Baltimore from June 30 to July 4. See the last issue of The Friend for profiles of other delegates.*



**Sue Smith** (Hawai'i Island Association), a member of Church of the Holy Cross, chairs the Justice and Witness Missional Team and serves as secretary of the Hawai'i Island Association. About going to her first General Synod, she said, "I am looking forward to finding out more about what other congregations and conferences are doing with justice and witness issues considering the current political climate."

**Diane Meyer** (Tri-Isle Association) is a member of Po'okela Church on Maui and treasurer of the Tri-Isle Association. In 1957 she attended the Uniting General Synod which formed the United Church of Christ. This year she looks forward to fellowshiping with like-minded people of all colors and creeds. "Especially in this time when the mindset is that religion is irrelevant in people's lives, I want to witness the spirit moving amongst us," she said.



**Laura Young** (O'ahu Association) a member of United Church of Christ—Judd Street, is a student at University of Hawai'i at Manoa. She has attended numerous youth events and 'Aha Pae'aina. This will be her first Synod as a delegate. "I am so excited and am really looking forward to meeting new people who I know I will have a lot in common with," she said. "I am excited to see how big the denomination that I am a part of really is."

**Pualani Muraki** (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches) is the moderator and chair of the board of trustees at Lanakila Congregational Church on Hawai'i Island. She has been a delegate in the past, and she remembers greatly enjoying the worship music and educational booths at past Synods. Her favorite Synod memory is of witnessing UCC member Barack Obama deliver a message in 2007.



Concluding his well-received keynote speech, Eric exhorted Christians to "use [new media] to testify to our hope. Use them to testify to our source of strength. Use them to testify to our aloha. Use them to testify to aloha ke Akua."

A wide variety of workshops was also offered at the Church Leaders Event, including "Effective Social Media for Church," which introduced best practices for social media and strategies for enhancing worship and ministries using Facebook.

Specialized workshops were offered for moderators, treasurers and Christian educators. Two workshops focused on curriculum: "Our Whole Lives Sexuality Curriculum" and "White Privilege—Let's Talk," a free adult curriculum from the United Church of Christ designed to engage churches in bold and substantive conversations on race.

Other workshops focused on youth ministry, church history and archives, insurance, revitalization tools, biblical self-defense for LGBT inclusivity, and methods for deploying assets for mission.

The Church Leaders Event was sponsored in part by the Church Building & Loan Fund, which provided carry bags for all participants and a workshop on building and financing.

For more from the Church Leaders Event, including photos and workshop handouts, visit [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

## resource List

### Strengthen The Church

Giving to the Strengthen the Church special missional offering helps build an auspicious future for the United Church of Christ.



Funds from this annual offering help plant new churches, revitalize existing churches and develop spiritual life in youth and young adults. Money received is split evenly between the Hawai'i Conference and UCC national ministries.

In Hawai'i, the money is used to fund new projects in local churches, especially those focused on youth ministry, through Christian Investment Grants administered by the Stewardship Missional Team.

The suggested date to collect this year's offering is Pentecost Sunday, June 4, though churches are invited to receive it any Sunday. Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at [www.ucc.org/stc](http://www.ucc.org/stc).

News briefs are adapted from *UCC News*, the online news portal for the United Church of Christ. For details on these and other stories, visit [www.ucc.org/news](http://www.ucc.org/news).

## Task force identifies future UCC priorities

After exploring what a relevant and thriving United Church of Christ would look like in ten years, a task force charged by the UCC Board now has a clear picture of issues that matter to members of the denomination.

The Rev. Darrell Goodwin, chair of the Strategic Implementation Task Force, revealed that climate change, racial justice and income inequality were the top three issues identified. Other issues were immigration justice and religious tolerance.

The Rev. John Dorhauer, UCC general minister and president, said the task force's work was critical in articulating "a future worth living into." He added, "The Task Force has given us a clear vision and has articulated a set of priorities that will help define and design relevant and meaningful mission going forward."



## UCC among religious groups supporting limits to church political activity



Partisan politics have no place in the pulpit, and the UCC, along with nearly one hundred religious organizations, wants to keep it that way. Faith groups from Christian, Jewish, Muslim

and Hindu traditions are urging Congress to preserve the "Johnson Amendment" limiting churches' political activities.

The Johnson Amendment, signed into law in 1954, prohibits tax-exempt organizations from endorsing or opposing political candidates or political parties, but not from policy issue advocacy.

Donald Trump vowed to "totally destroy" the Johnson Amendment, arguing that it infringes on religious free speech. Opponents believe repealing it would be "highly divisive" and could turn houses of worship into "another loophole in campaign finance laws."

"The fact that such an overwhelming number of faith traditions have signed on to a letter to Congress opposing attempts to weaken the Johnson Amendment points to the importance of preserving this critical distinction between faithful civic engagement and partisan politics," said Sandy Sorensen, who directs the UCC's Washington, D.C., office that advocates for the church's faith perspective on policy.

## UCC sends assistance to South Sudan

The UCC is sending an initial \$85,000 in aid to South Sudan and three other African counties to help combat a crisis fueled by war, severe drought and famine.

"Famine is not a word that is used lightly or that simply means a shortage of food. This crisis, this emergency, demands our immediate attention and response," said Zach Wolgemuth, executive director of



UCC Disaster Ministries. "The One Great Hour of Sharing funds that we've received from our generous donors allowed us to respond quickly and undoubtedly save lives."

In addition to the initial assistance will be another \$10,000 from OGHS funding sent annually to support the ongoing Sudan/Darfur "Tents of Hope" work with internally displaced persons.

To offer your assistance, give to the UCC International Emergency Relief Fund or One Great Hour of Sharing.

## Arcadia Turns 50

This year Arcadia Retirement Residence, Hawai'i's first nationally accredited continuing care retirement community, celebrates fifty years of gracious senior living.

Arcadia, which opened its doors on January 16, 1967, as a ministry of Central Union Church, is a member of the Council for Health and Human Services of the United Church of Christ.



*Dawn Ige, First Lady of Hawai'i, and Emmet White, President and CEO of Arcadia Retirement Residence.*

To mark the anniversary, Arcadia gifted \$10,000 to Central Union Church and published two books: *Arcadia 1967-2017: 50 Years of Senior Living Excellence*, which documents its history; and *Arcadia's Family Cookbook*, a collection of favorite recipes submitted by residents, clients and employees.

On February 16, Dawn Ige, First Lady of Hawai'i, delivered a congratulatory message to Arcadia at a community party.



## Churches Confer Emeritus Status on Beloved Pastors

John Hoover and Glenn Frazier were recently conferred the honored status of pastor emeritus from churches they served for many years before retirement. Churches typically honor their ministers with this status for lengthy and distinguished service. This honorary status carries no pastoral responsibility and provides no compensation.



John Hoover, Pastor Emeritus, Hokulua Church

John, who ministered tirelessly for twenty-seven years at Hokulua UCC on Hawai'i Island, was honored with this status on February 26. Prior to his arrival in 1990, the church had been restored from a state of abandonment and disrepair. John re-established the church, making it a valuable part of the community.

"He was a kahu in the truest sense of the word," said moderator Cole Salera. "He is looked upon as a father figure of Hokulua Church—the guiding spirit and cohesive force that has held our church together."

Glenn, who served for seventeen years as Pastor of Church of the Pacific on Kaua'i, received the recognition during Sunday worship on March 12. His ministry at this church began when it was on the verge of closing, unable to afford a pastor or sanctuary. The congregation revitalized, eventually purchasing property and erecting a house of worship, after Glenn volunteered to become their pastor.



Glenn Frazier, Pastor Emeritus, Church of the Pacific

"If we did not have Glenn and his wife Mary—their guidance, support and being with us every step of the way—we would not be here today," said moderator Kay Little. "We just love him and think he has done amazing things to get us to where we are today."

While the accomplishments of these beloved ministers are too numerous to cite in this article, they are forever symbolized by their prestigious titles. Mahalo to John, who retired in 2016, and to Glenn, who retired in 2013.

Thanks to our friends, *The Friend* is free of charge to anyone who requests it. We offer our sincere mahalo to those who have generously given a monetary gift to help defray publication costs. A gift of \$10 will pay for one person's subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, 1848 Nu'uuanu Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817.



## Highlights from the Website

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

**David Hirano** concluded his interim ministry at Kaumakapili Church on January 31.

**Rennie Mau** resigned as pastor of Koolau Hui'ia Protestant Church on January 31.

**David Kieffer** began as Interim Pastor at Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu on February 19.

**Wally Ryan Kuroiwa** ended as Interim Minister of Iao United Church of Christ on February 26.

**Florentino Cordova** was called as Pastor of Iao United Church of Christ beginning March 1. He is an ordained minister with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and previously served churches in California.

**Jaya Prakash (JP) Sabbithi**, Director of Counseling Services at Hospice Hawai'i, resigned his ordained ministerial standing in the O'ahu Association of the United Church of Christ as of April 1.

### Conference Calendar of Events

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| April 13-14 | Maundy Thursday/Good Friday<br>(Conference Office Closed)  |
| April 22    | State Council of Hawaiian<br>Congregational Churches Board |
| April 28-29 | Kaua'i Association 'Aha Mokupuni                           |
| May 6       | O'ahu Association 'Aha Mokupuni                            |
| May 13      | Tri-Isle Association 'Aha Mokupuni                         |
| May 20      | Hawai'i Island Association<br>'Aha Mokupuni                |
| May 29      | Memorial Day<br>(Conference Office Closed)                 |
| June 12     | Kamehameha Day Observed<br>(Conference Office Closed)      |
| June 14-17  | 'Aha Pae'aina  |



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April 2017

## Japanese Woman Pioneers Shelters in Hawaiʻi

By Lori Yamashiro, Member  
Nuʻuanu Congregational Church

**W**hat is a young Japanese bride to do after being widowed early? Move to Hawaiʻi and open a woman's shelter? That's what Yeiko Mizobe So did at the turn of the twentieth century.



Yeiko was born in Fukuoka in 1865 to a traditional samurai family. But when she married at 23 and lost her husband after only six months, she set out on a most untraditional path for a Japanese woman at the time.

After her husband's death, she met missionaries Orramel Hinckley and Ann Eliza Clark Gulick, and became a Christian. Then, "one night," she

would later write, "I was alone in the room and prayed and felt that God spoke to me." This inspired her to sell her belongings, leave the comfort of her country estate and enroll at Kobe Women's Seminary to become an evangelist.

In 1894, the Gulicks suggested to the Hawaiian Board of Missions (now Hawaiʻi Conference of the United Church

## Our Historical Roots

of Christ) that a Japanese missionary be called to serve the growing immigrant population—and they had just the person in mind. So in 1895, Yeiko arrived in Hawaiʻi, toured the islands with the Gulicks, and felt God calling her to Honolulu to open a women's rescue home for "picture brides" experiencing abuse in their marriages to Japanese men working Hawaiʻi plantations.

Yeiko's shelter would harbor more than seven hundred women in its ten years of existence. Under her supervision, women were educated in child care, hygiene and gynecology. She also went out into the community and visited women in their homes, offering support and care.

Her work attracted community interest and garnered support from individuals and charitable organizations. Among them was the Women's Society of the church known today as Nuʻuanu Congregational Church (UCC). With its support, she established a children's home for neglected and orphaned children and provided care for over 350 children of working mothers. She adopted one of the orphans, Esther Mitsunaga, who later became organist at the Nuʻuanu Church.

Yeiko's shelters for women and children were innovative and unusual, but not at all surprising for this most daring and pioneering woman of her time.