

Kalaupapa Church Loses Last Resident Patient

Edwin K. Lelepali, a member of Kana'ana Hou-Siloama Church in Kalaupapa, died on February 7 at the age of 88. Edwin, or "Pali" as he was called by so many, was the last patient member of the church still residing in the remote peninsula on Molokai.



Edwin Lelepali stands at the pulpit of Kana'ana Hou Church in Kalaupapa.

The church counts one last patient member, Nancy Chang Talino, who lives on O'ahu at Hale Mohalu, the unit at Leahi Hospital devoted to the care of Hansen's Disease patients.

Pali was a long time, avid church member from the time he first entered the settlement in 1942 as a teenager. As a young man, he sang in the choir at church services and participated in countless church events. In later years, he led the church as its moderator and often shared simple but moving messages from the pulpit on Sundays.

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Stewardship Theme Dominates Leaders Event

Stewardship was the theme for the Church Leaders Event in February, attended by nearly two hundred people from six islands. Throughout the day, the stewardship of gifts, assets and resources was addressed through a variety of workshops.

Raise Funds Successfully

"The best fundraisers are the best storytellers," said Alan Akana, Pastor of Koloa Union Church, who led a workshop on "Fundraising Fundamentals for Churches."

"Start telling stories during worship services, and you will automatically see your giving go up," he said. "People give because they're connected, and people connect through stories."

Alan outlined four I's for successful church fundraising: Inform (create a collective vision), Involve (engage everyone in the effort), Inspire (pray for your church and members), and Invite (ask people to give). Follow these steps, he said, and church income virtually always increases.

Pastors, he suggested, can do their part by regularly encouraging members to share why they love their church and by always handwriting notes thanking people for their generosity.

Churches May Be Losing Out with Property

"If your church owns facilities that stand vacant during the week, you are potentially losing significant income," said Ellen Carson to attendees of her workshop, "Stewardship Strategies for Church Properties."

Carson, member of Church of the Crossroads and local attorney, said that "your greatest asset is your property holdings. Hawaii has some of the most expensive real estate in the nation, and if you're not trying to make money off of it, it's like putting all your funds in a bank with no interest."

She noted that annual income for her church is estimated at \$48,000, and the fellowship hall could bring a little over \$50,000 per year.

Ideas she offered for rentals include use of the sanctuary (for music lessons, conferences, weddings); parking lot (to neighbors, commuters, farmers markets, food trucks);

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Alan Akana leads a workshop at the Church Leaders Event.

Hunting for Coconuts

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

The hunt is on for Easter coconuts at Kalaupapa. This variation on the egg hunt is unique, as far as I know, to the Hansen's Disease settlement on Moloka'i. Several years ago, someone conceived the idea of gathering the plentiful fruit, applying paint, and hiding them. Then on Easter Sunday, patients and workers would drive around and load up car trunks or truck beds with their huge, brightly colored treasures!



Easter coconut hunts haven't occurred recently, but the revival this year is fitting after the deaths of three beloved patients in the last few months, including Edwin Lelepali, the last patient-member of our Kana'ana Hou-Siloama Church who was still living in the settlement. (See the page one story in this *Friend*. The other two patients, Nancy and James Brede, a couple living at Hale Mohalu at Leahi Hospital on O'ahu, died just weeks apart.)



The Kalaupapa community paints coconuts for the Easter coconut hunt.

With so few patients left, out of over eight thousand since 1866, the death of any one is big news and hits us hard. Edwin's death, for example, prompted a news story in the local paper and hundreds of shares and emotional comments on Facebook from

people throughout Hawai'i and around the world. In part it's because Edwin, affectionately called Pali by many, was well-liked, so much so that everyone believed they were his best friend. In part, also, it's because Edwin's passing is a stark reminder of something larger: the end, the death even, of Kalaupapa itself.

So an Easter coconut hunt, with its allusions to spring, new life and resurrection, might appear to be a hollow and superficial act, a denial of all reality. But in fact, as I have now seen, the hunt is actually a witness to the enduring truth that death is not the final word, that new life and resurrection are inevitable. And Edwin's life and death are the proof.

Edwin himself believed the end was near, not just his, but Kalaupapa's, too. He was certain that dwindling numbers of patient-residents would force the State of Hawai'i to abandon Kalaupapa and move patients out of the settlement. So firmly

did he believe this that he saw no use in calling a new minister or accepting new members into the church. He also began to make final arrangements such as giving contributions to churches as mahalo for their regular visits and support over the years—and to prevent the church's assets from going to the State, something he feared would happen at his death and the church's closure.

Then somewhere along the way, Edwin's thinking changed. He relented and took in a new member, Richard Miller, a National Park Service employee who had attended the church since he first arrived. He asked Richard and the Hawai'i Conference to help manage the church's funds. And he consented later to Richard being licensed as minister of the church. Although Edwin's health continued to decline, I heard him speak less and less about any end of the church and of Kalaupapa. On Sundays when he himself was not always well enough to make it to church for worship, he knew that Richard and others were carrying on with the Sunday service.

Even without patient-members to attend church on Sundays, Kana'ana Hou-Siloama Church will continue to be a worshipping presence in the community.

While Edwin's death might have once invited speculation about the church's demise, his turn of late left no doubt that the church would not be closing its doors any time soon. Even without patient-members to attend church on Sundays, Kana'ana Hou-Siloama Church will continue to be a worshipping presence in the community, welcoming to its pews both workers and visitors. Clearly, something new is emerging on Kalaupapa, and the church will be a vital part of that.

So hunting for coconuts is much more than a nostalgic re-enactment of a past tradition. It's an affirmation of a resurrection that takes place in the midst of death. That such new life is inevitable, even when it seems like our communities, churches and society are dying, is the powerful witness of one man in a tiny church on a remote peninsula.



God is still speaking

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Deacons Play Important Role of Service

Deacons hold a vital position in churches, and yet many are unaware of what their role should entail. A workshop at the recent Church Leaders Event, led by Associate Conference Minister Richard Kamanu, helped clarify what the deacon's role is.



Richard Kamanu discusses the role of the deacon at the Church Leaders Event.

The office of deacon is described in Acts 6:2-4, where the twelve apostles asked the body of disciples to select seven "of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to help feed the hungry. Out of this initial assignment evolved the designated servant-leader.

"The role of the deacon is to aid the pastor in spiritual and physical ministry," said Richard. "Pastors are not God, and deacons have a responsibility to pray for them and give them guidance."

Each church should decide what servanthood means in its particular context and then allow deacons to live out that ministry. Common functions include visiting the sick and shut-ins, collecting food and clothing for the needy, advising the pastor about members' spiritual lives, and overseeing outreach ministries.

In some denominations, the word "deacon" is applied to some clergy. In the United Church of Christ, the deacon's responsibilities vary greatly, but are always characterized by service. Mundane tasks like arranging books and replacing candles should not be the primary focus.

"The purpose of deacons is really more in the spiritual realm than housekeeping or chores, but sometimes those have taken precedence over serving others," said Richard. "If you are only doing housekeeping, you are not fulfilling your role as a deacon."

Increasingly, a board of deacons works closely with the minister in overseeing the church's pastoral outreach. Members identify the congregation's needs and make decisions about allocating time, energy and resources to meet them.

Attributes of effective deacons include a willingness to be a servant of God, the ability to listen and cooperate with diverse people, understanding confidentiality and appropriate boundaries, and having genuine concern for others. Specialized training can help with visitations and counseling.

"Limit hospital and home visitations to fifteen minutes," advised Richard. "See how people are doing, offer them a scripture and prayer, and update them about the life of your church."

To increase skills and knowledge, Richard recommends that newly-elected deacons shadow seasoned deacons. Studying your church's constitution and bylaws, as well as asking for a position description and attending seminars related to your duties, are also helpful.

The Greek word, *diakonos*, means servant, and service has been associated with the role of deacon from the time of Jesus.

"Deacons are very important," said Richard. "They follow up Jesus' message in words with deeds. It's not just telling people the gospel. It's showing them."

September Clergy Retreat Hosts UCC President

The annual clergy retreat of the Hawai'i Conference will feature John Dorhauer, the new General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. The retreat this year will be held September 26-28 on O'ahu at a location to be announced.

John will also be the guest preacher at a community-wide worship service to be held Sunday, September 25, 3 p.m., at Central Union Church. All UCC members and friends are invited to participate in the service and meet John and his wife, Mimi.

More information about the retreat and the worship service is forthcoming.

(Kalaupapa Church, continued from page 1)

Pali was extremely popular among both Kalaupapa residents and visitors to the settlement. He was known, for example, for the parties he threw at Easter, Halloween, New Years and Super Bowl for the entire community of patients and workers. In the days just before he died, he was on O'ahu shopping for food for this year's Super Bowl, but he fell ill and was unable to return home. The food was sent ahead, and the party took place without him. Pali died later that night at Hale Mohalu.

Conference Minister Charles Buck, who officiated at Pali's funeral service, said that he was "the kind of guy who made everyone feel like they were his best friend." On February 18, at his service the pews of Kana'ana Hou Church were packed with many of his "best friends" sharing stories, song and prayer. After the service, friends placed his casket into his white truck and drove him around the entire peninsula for a final farewell before his interment.

Pali's death leaves 13 surviving patients out of the over eight thousand persons who were exiled to the settlement beginning in 1866. However, the doors of Kana'ana Hou-Siloama Church will not be closing anytime soon. Licensed minister, Richard Miller, who also works for the National Park Service, will continue to hold Sunday services for workers in the community and visitors who stay over the weekend.

Church Leaders Event

Nearly two hundred people attended the Church Leaders Event, February 27, at Nu'uano Congregational Church. Keynote speaker Donaldson Hill shared information about stewardship and fundraising in churches. Workshop topics included stewardship, church insurance, planned giving, and information for moderators and treasurers.



Churches Take Stand and Act to Stop Global Warming

Global warming is one of the gravest threats facing humanity. Across the world, people of faith are taking action to preserve life for future generations.

At the forefront of this effort are two United Church of Christ congregations in Hawai'i. Driven by God's mandate to care for creation, Central Union Church and Church of the Crossroads have signed the Paris Pledge—a commitment to halve their carbon pollution by 2030 and to be carbon neutral by 2050.

"Churches must assume the moral responsibility of preventing the impacts of climate change," said Chuck Burrows, chair of the mission team for peace at Church of the Crossroads. "If we don't do anything about it, God's creation will perish."

More than 180 congregations and four thousand individuals have signed onto the



Paris Pledge, which was a message to the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris that climate change must be addressed. At COP21, 195 nations reached a landmark accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and avert the direst effects of climate change.

Living into its pledge, Central Union Church has retrofitted its lighting system and installed a campus-wide, energy-efficient air conditioning system. This has resulted in \$64,000 of energy savings and 138 less tons of carbon dioxide emitted annually.

Central Union Church also installed 336 photovoltaic (PV) panels, which provide 28% of the church's electrical needs, cutting carbon emissions by 254,000 pounds and saving 445 barrels of petroleum per year.

"Our church didn't have money for PV panels, so we took out a purchase power agreement," said Carolynn Bell-Tuttle, who leads the church's Green Team. "We lease our roof to a company that installed the panels, and purchasing their electricity saves \$12,000 annually."

An energy audit revealed that Central Union Church has already halved its carbon footprint. Interfaith Power & Light, a faith-based organization that launched the Paris Pledge, recognizes the church as one of nine nationwide to reduce carbon emissions by at least forty percent.

Church of the Crossroads has taken a similar approach by signing a contract to install a PV system that is estimated to reduce electrical use by 100.8%. The excess (.8%) will be returned to the Hawaiian Electric Company grid. The church also retrofitted its electrical appliances and plans to increase recycling and grow organic food.

"We encourage all churches and households to do this," said Chuck, a founder of the Hawai'i chapter of Interfaith Power & Light. "It is especially important for religious groups to set an example."

Many churches qualify for free lighting retrofits through a program from Hawai'i Energy. Windward UCC on O'ahu received free LED upgrades and installation resulting in savings of \$6,000. Another option is a low-interest loan from Hawai'i Community Reinvestment Corporation, which assisted Central Union Church in its efforts.

Scientists conclude that if atmospheric temperatures rise to two degrees Celsius, there will be severe droughts and flooding, widespread food and water shortages, and devastating storms that have the potential to destroy life. The good news is we can all help to prevent this.

"The impacts of climate change are so dramatic that each of us must make a stand," said Carolynn. "Even if you're a small church that can only afford to retrofit lightbulbs, take that stance and celebrate it."

Churches and individuals interested in taking the Paris Pledge and learning how to combat climate change can do so at www.parispledge.org.

resource List

Strengthen the Church Offering

The annual Strengthen the Church special offering empowers youth to build the future of the United Church of Christ.

Money received from this offering is split evenly between the Hawai'i Conference and UCC national ministries. Nationally, the offering supports youth and young adult ministries, new church plants, and grants to help congregations communicate the "God is still speaking" message.

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

Churches are invited to receive this offering on any Sunday, but this year's suggested date is Pentecost Sunday, May 15. Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church are available at 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.

UCC President Installed in April at Three Services

General Minister and President, John C. Dorhauer, will be formally installed over three days, April 15-17, in worship services to be held in New York, Chicago and Seattle. He is the ninth general minister and president of the United Church of Christ. Riverside Church in Manhattan, Trinity UCC on Chicago's South Side, and Plymouth Church UCC in downtown Seattle will be the host congregations. Each church is firmly rooted in the UCC national mission of social justice, civil rights and national activism, causes that Dorhauer strongly upholds.



Spotlight Sparks Discussion on Sexual Abuse

The UCC has developed a discussion guide for use by churches to address ways faith communities can become aware of abuse. Sexual abuse by church leaders is a serious problem that was recently brought back into focus by the film, *Spotlight*, the story of how the *Boston Globe* newspaper uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and cover-up in the local Catholic archdiocese. "Ethics matter to every person, regardless of religious affiliation," said the Rev. Holly Miller-Shank, leader of the UCC's Ministerial Excellence, Support and Authorization team.

Guess Takes Role as CHHSM Vice President

J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister of the UCC's Local Church Ministries, will leave his position as a national officer to become vice president of the UCC's Council for Health and Human Service Ministries. Guess began his work at the national offices in 2000 as communications director for Justice and Witness Ministries. He served as the news director and editor of *United Church News* and eventually moved into the role of director of the UCC's Publishing, Identity and Communication Ministry.



"At this moment in my ministry, I am very excited about continuing my leadership in the UCC through support of its more than 350 health and human service ministries," said Guess.

UCC Helps Thousands in Fiji after Severe Cyclone

On February 20, Cyclone Winston, a Category 5 storm, hit the Pacific island nation of Fiji with winds of nearly 200 miles per hour, claiming the lives of 29 people and leaving 13,000 homeless. UCC Disaster Ministries responded immediately with an initial \$7,000 to help put tens of thousands of affected people back on their feet. These funds will help cover the costs of basic necessities such as materials for temporary shelters, educational supplies for children, medicine and clean drinking water.



National Youth Event Update: Registration Revised

Registration for adults and families going to the UCC's upcoming National Youth Event (NYE) will begin May 1 on a first-come, first-serve basis. The change was made to ensure that all youth participants who want to attend are accommodated. NYE organizers recognized the importance of family but also understand that seats may fill quickly. For more information, go to nye.uccpages.org.

UCC Leaders and Ministries Support Arkansas Poultry Workers

UCC members are speaking on behalf of Arkansas poultry workers to call attention to negative working conditions at Tyson Foods. The Rev. Albon Langon, Pastor of Marshallese UCC in Arkansas, was among the voices at a rally at a Tyson Foods shareholder meeting in February. Members of Langon's church emigrated from the Marshall Islands, and some work in the Tyson facility.



Through shareholder activism, both United Church Funds and the Pension Boards have joined faith-based investors in the quest for fair treatment. Among the complaints are low wages and alleged wage theft, limited access to health benefits, harassment and discrimination. Some employees have said they were forced to urinate in their pants because supervisors would not let them go to the bathroom.

(Stewardship, continued from page 1)

commercial kitchen (to caterers, bakers); steeple (for cellphone towers and antennae); classroom (for tutoring, job training); property (for large-scale ventures such as condominiums); and more.

Assessing legal and liability issues is imperative, and she counseled that churches should retain an attorney to consider pros and cons and review contracts. Churches should also consult with a commercial leasing agent to evaluate fair market value of property.

Identifying Givers' Needs Is Key

"When it comes to giving, it is not about what the church needs, but what the giver needs," according to Cheri Lovell, a fundraising consultant and leader of the workshop, "Money and My Church."



Fundraising consultant Cheri Lovell led two workshops.

"Rather than asking for pledges to fulfill your church's budget, talk about what is important to donors such as using money in ways that align with their values," she continued. "Donors need to feel like their money will help to advance God's realm. They want to be part of

a mission, not part of fulfilling a budget."

She also suggested using online giving to increase pledging, noting that the average gift in the pews on Sunday is \$25, while the average online gift is \$100.

Write Wills and Hold Conversations

"The biggest stewardship decision of our lives is determining what happens to our assets after death. Although most charitable dollars are transferred through wills, most Americans never write one," according to Don Hill, who was the day's keynote speaker and led a workshop on planned giving.

He recommended that churches encourage their members to write a will as an act of ministry. He also recommended training congregational leadership in planned giving and fostering conversations about personal stewardship.

Don pointed out that major donors increasingly desire to influence how their money will be spent and are giving less to churches.

"We in the church often have a 'give us the money and shut up' attitude about fundraising," he said. "But you can't ignore the people who pay the bills."

For more from the Church Leaders Event, including audio recordings of sessions and workshop handouts, visit www.hcucc.org.



Highlights from the Website

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

Service of Installation

The O'ahu Association installed **Brandon Duran** as Associate Minister of Central Union Church on February 7.

Pastoral Changes

Sarah Rentzel Jones was called as a part-time associate conference minister on February 1. She will continue to serve as Pastor of Lana'i Union Church. Her primary area of responsibility as an ACM will be as staff to the Tri-Isle Association (Aha O Na Moku-puni 'O Maui, Moloka'i A Me Lana'i).

Jonathan Pak began as Pastor of Waiokeola Congregational Church on February 1. He was ordained by the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and previously served as Kahu Hope (associate pastor) of Kawaiaha'o Church. He will be installed by the O'ahu Association on June 26.

Enoch Stephen resigned as minister of the Nichigobu (Japanese language) Ministry at Kahului Union Church on February 21. He, and his wife, Yong, moved to Korea in March to serve a Japanese-speaking congregation.

Tom Fujita ended his interim ministry at Lihue Christian Church on March 27. **David Kieffer** began as new Interim Minister on April 1. David was previously pastor at Lili'uokalani Protestant Church.

Choo Lak Yeow finished his term as Interim Minister of Church of the Holy Cross on April 3.

Eric Anderson began as Pastor of Church of the Holy Cross on April 5. Eric was formerly an associate conference minister in the Connecticut Conference.

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.



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April 2016

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

| | |
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| April 9 | State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board |
| April 16 | Hawai'i Island Association 'Aha Mokupuni |
| April 29-30 | Kaua'i Association 'Aha Mokupuni |
| May 7 | O'ahu Association 'Aha Mokupuni |
| May 14 | Tri-Isle Association 'Aha Mokupuni |
| June 8-11 | 194th 'Aha Pae'aina |

Tips For Successful Fundraising

The following proven strategies for increasing donations to your church were offered at the Church Leaders Event workshop led by Alan Akana (see the article on page 1).

1. During worship service, allow members to share why they love church.
2. Ask prospective major donors in capital campaigns to give early on.
3. Be upfront and honest about money needed.
4. Pray for a positive outcome (when people pray, they are inspired to give).
5. Create a theme and scripture verse for annual fundraising drives.
6. Remind people at least twelve times about fundraising efforts.
7. Involve everyone in fundraisers (they tend to give about 30 percent more).
8. Thank donors with handwritten letters from the pastor.
9. Talk about stewardship year round.
10. Don't be personally attached to the outcome of fundraisers or capital campaigns.