

## UCC Gathers in Long Beach to Experience "God's Vision"

"God's Vision" was on the minds of nearly three thousand people gathered in Long Beach, California, for General Synod 29.



General Synod delegates from Hawai'i take a break from their work to pose for a picture.

Resolutions, workshops, worship services and the business of Synod emphasized the theme, "God's Vision," which was chosen in part to help the United Church of Christ move from a governance structure of five independent boards into a single United Church Board. From Hawai'i Caroline Peters Belsom (Waiola Church) and Dean Wakuzawa (Kailua Christian Church) were among the thirty-six at-large members to be elected to the new fifty-two member board.

More than forty delegates and visitors from Hawai'i attended General Synod. The delegates, ten voting delegates and two associate delegates, have shared written reflections (see sidebar on page 7) and will also share personal experiences with their respective associations in the coming months.

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## 'Aha Participants Explore God's Vision

Council members and trustees were elected, a Kalaupapa Sunday resolution unanimously passed and distinguished theologian Allan Boesak delivered the keynote address at the 191st 'Aha Pae'aina in Kailua-Kona, June 5-8.

The 'Aha opened June 5-6 with the 'Aha Iki at Mokuaikaua Church, attended by ninety-five people from Hawaiian churches around the Conference. The 'Aha Makua followed June 6-8 with participation by 171 delegates and visitors.

Part of the 'Aha Pae'aina was the 'Aha Youth Event, which featured special programs and activities led by youth leaders Welina Tong and Makaiwa Tong from Ola'a First Hawaiian Church; Rebecca Weible from Kailua Christian Church; and Kristen Young from UCC-Judd Street. The event gave youth from different islands an opportunity to meet, interact with, and inspire one another.



'Aha Pae'aina delegates and visitors gathered for dinner and stayed for the 'Aha Mele on Friday night.

The keynote address by Allan Boesak on Friday was well-received. Allan, who worked alongside Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela to help end apartheid in South Africa, urged the churches of Hawai'i to be more outspoken against social, economic and ecological injustices. (See related story on page 3.)

Workshops at the 'Aha Pae'aina included topics such as social media for youth; the globalized mass media industry and social justice; the history of Kalaupapa and current efforts to make sure the mission is not forgotten; and the experience of a South African missionary.

Delegates to the 191st 'Aha Pae'aina took the following actions:

1. Established a "Kalaupapa Sunday" to commemorate the more than 8,000 Hansen's disease patients exiled to Kalaupapa beginning in 1866. The Justice & Witness Missional Team will implement this resolution, including setting suggested dates and disseminating resources.
2. Approved the Conference Budget for the fiscal year beginning July 2013.

*(continued on page 7)*

## From an End to a Beginning

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Recently, one of our churches buried a time capsule and did something notable.

Just over a year ago, in this space, I reported that members of Siloama Church in Kalaupapa opened a time capsule placed in the cornerstone in 1966. That year marked the one hundredth anniversary of the church's founding—the very first church established at Kalaupapa by Hansen's disease patients—as well as the completion of repairs to the chapel and its steeple.

Church members had actually forgotten about this time capsule. That is, until Teruo Ogawa, who had sealed the small bronze box inside the cornerstone, mentioned it to another member, Nancy Chang Talino. That memory triggered the same in others, and they all agreed that they wanted to extract the capsule and see what was inside. This they did on May 19, 2012.

As I wrote, a month later, in *The Friend*, what they found was mostly big bags of desiccant (to absorb moisture). Buried at the bottom was a small bundle containing a Hawaiian Bible, two copies of the anniversary worship service, and Ethel Damon's history of Siloama. In truth, there was disappointment that this was it.

The next day, Edwin Lelepali, the church's Moderator, told me that he wanted to do a new time capsule. Let's take, he said, the original box and fill it with patients' letters, stories, photos and mementoes. It should be interesting and fun for those who open it in the future.

It took a year to make it happen, and sadly along the way one member, Katherine Costales, who was particularly enthusiastic about the project, died. But on July 17, 2013, a good-sized crowd gathered in front of Siloama Church to re-embed the original capsule, now packed full of materials from patients and others.

Time capsules are fairly commonplace, so what made this one notable? It was the act of blessing and burying it—without assurance that it would ever be seen or remembered again. No one buries a time capsule to be forgotten forever. That was the case with the first one in 1966: they fully expected a community of some sort to be around fifty years later to open it.

But this time around, in 2013, with sixteen elderly patients remaining, the end is clearly at hand. Names, stories and memories may well fade after the last person passes. And

fifty years from now, the settlement is likely to resemble less a community than a museum or mausoleum. So why go to the trouble of filling and sealing a time capsule?

But they did it anyway. That act was a powerful statement of their faith that even as *an* end is coming, it is not *the* end. Theirs was a confident and defiant faith against death and despair, a refusal to accept the end and give up. They believed that in fifty years their names will be remembered, their stories still told, and their memories living on.



Guests at the July 17, 2013, time capsule service view some of the contents.

Of course, we can believe this. Efforts such as our recent 'Aha Pae'aina vote to establish a Kalaupapa Sunday in our churches; the research to identify by name all those exiled and to place these names on a monument; and the interest in the history as evidenced by frequent exhibits and new scholarly publications are assurances to us that they will be remembered. But for Siloama members, indeed for all patients, all they have is the "assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen," that is, faith alone (Hebrews 11:1).

This is the kind of faith we need for our own "end times," those moments in our lives when everything we're accustomed to is about to change. Rather than to give in and give up, to assume that anything we do will be worthless in the future, we want to believe that it is never the end. Faith, like what inspired the re-burial of the Siloama time capsule, is enough to lead us from an end to a new beginning.



God is still speaking

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## Theologian Challenges Church Leaders

Theologian Allan Boesak, anti-apartheid activist and author of 17 books, inspired and challenged fifty clergy and laypeople at an ecumenical gathering sponsored by the Hawai'i Conference and hosted at 15 Craigside retirement community on June 18.

Focusing on reconciliation, Allan called for Christians to take radical stands against systemic injustice.

"[Christians] are as guilty as governments of injustice, and more guilty because we know better," he said, alluding to the "Christian quietism" practiced in the face of iniquity.

Discussing his latest book, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism*, Allan said that in the church and across the world, humanity needs a new prophetic witness. "Political pietism," or political accommodation that does not address critical questions of justice, equality and dignity, has led the United States to engage in multiple wars and become the world's most unequal industrialized country in wealth disparity.

He reasoned that in order to have a relationship with God, one must have a reconciled relationship with the oppressed. Because reconciliation is impossible without remorse or repentance rooted in Jesus, churches are called in word and deed to set the example of what it means to be a reconciled community.

"The church needs to learn again," he explained. "Some people say the church has no influence or power anymore.... Rappers have more followers than preachers. We have lost our power because we've lost our Holy Spirit power, speaking not out of conviction but custom."

Asserting that patriarchy is the original sin of Christians, Allan illustrated how the church has become a community of hierarchies, not equals. Another life on earth is possible, he argued, and that journey begins with radical reconciliation.

Raised in apartheid South Africa, Allan has battled for justice all his life. After serving as President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches from 1982 to 1991, he called for the formation of the United Democratic Front, the largest organized, non-racial, anti-apartheid movement in the history of South Africa.

In addition to his appearance in Honolulu, he delivered the keynote address at the 191st 'Aha Pae'aina and participated in a forum on race relations at Keawala'i Congregational Church on Maui. He has recently accepted a four-year appointment to the Desmond Tutu Chair of Peace, Global Justice and Reconciliation Studies at Butler University and Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.



## Hilo Coast Educator Honored by UCC

Since 1987, the United Church of Christ has honored 46 Educators with the Excellence in Teaching Award. At General Synod 29, Satsuki Unoki of Hilo Coast UCC joined this distinguished group.

An educator for 53 years, she was one of four honorees selected from 22 nominations received from churches throughout the UCC. The award recognizes outstanding educators who exemplify in the church and society the UCC values of continuing testament, extravagant welcome and changing lives.

"My first reaction," she said, "when I learned about the award was, 'REALLY?' It brought to my mind the many people who were my teachers and the many people who shared with me the joy of being a Christian and what loving Jesus really means."

In addition to being Christian Educator at Hilo Coast UCC since 1960, Satsuki was a public school teacher and counselor for 33 years. The scripture passage, "O taste and see that the Lord is good: Blessed is the one that trusts in God!" has guided her work, which includes leading Sunday school classes and adult Bible study, mentoring youth and youth leaders and sharing with other Christian educators.

Satsuki's love of teaching is a perfect match for this award, said Hilo Coast UCC Pastor Linda Petrucelli, because it embodies the UCC theme of continuing testament by encouraging questions instead of finding the "right" answer.

"It really did bring tears to my eyes [that Satsuki won this award]," said Linda. "Of all the people I know, Satsuki so deserves this recognition."

To Satsuki, being a Christian educator means leading by example and living a Christian life. "One does not need to know every word in the Bible, but be able to refer to and share its message with others," she said.



Satsuki and husband Richard pause for a picture after the awards ceremony at General Synod.

*(UCC Gathers, continued from page 1)*

A video produced by the Hawai'i Conference commemorated the twentieth anniversary of the UCC's 1993 apology to Native Hawaiians for the overthrow of the monarchy in 1893. The video was the highlight of a luncheon sponsored by Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries and Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches.

This video, as well as pictures and a blog, can be viewed on the Hawai'i Conference website at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).



# Faces around the Conference

The Friend

Conference Gathers in June for 'Aha Pae'aina Hosted by Hawai'i Island Association





## Hawai'i Delegates and Visitors Attend General Synod 29 in Long Beach





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).

## Resolution on Seminary Aid Sparks Debate

by Anthony Moujaes

It took a while to resolve, but the General Synod of the United Church of Christ voted in favor of a resolution on Tuesday, July 2, which aims to address issues in offering financial assistance to seminary students who are swimming in debt.

But how that funding will be implemented is something that remains to be answered, though the answer will likely come at General Synod 2015.

The resolution was the most debated among those that came before the delegates in Long Beach and was amended twice on the floor after the language was altered in committee.

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## UCC Recognizes United Samoan Ministries as Historically Underrepresented Group

by Tim Kershner

Despite some reservations about process, United Church of Christ General Synod delegates passed a resolution on Tuesday that adds the United Samoan Ministries as a historically under-represented group.



Currently, a variety of Samoan ministry groups are included among the denomination's Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries (PAAM). The resolution calls upon the church's leadership to add the United Samoan Ministries to membership on the Council of Racial and Ethnic Ministries.

Those supporting the measure acknowledged the growth of ethnic Samoan congregations and their significant contributions to the current life of some conferences.

"The Samoan churches in this conference are the fastest growing community in the United Church of Christ," says Felix Villanueva, conference minister for the Southern California Nevada Conference. "They understand what covenant really means."

Hawai'i Conference Minister Charles Buck also has a vibrant and growing Samoan church community in his conference, but says that "a number of Samoan churches have deep reservations" about the measure. He also suggested that since many Samoan churches have dual affiliation with the UCC and other denominations, conversations are necessary with our church partners.

An attempt to postpone the action to the next General Synod in 2015 failed.

## UCC to Become First U.S. Denomination to Move toward Divestment from Fossil Fuel Companies

by Micki Carter

A set of strategies to attack climate change—which includes a path to divestment from fossil fuel companies—was passed by General Synod 2013.

This action makes the United Church of Christ the first major religious body in the U.S. to vote to divest from fossil fuel companies. The resolution, brought by the Massachusetts Conference and backed by ten other conferences, calls for enhanced shareholder engagement in fossil fuel companies, an intensive search for fossil fuel-free investment vehicles and the identification of "best in class" fossil fuel companies by General Synod 2015.

"Today, the national Synod of the UCC added another 'first' when it became the first national faith communion to vote to divest from fossil fuel companies—and to do it with the support of its major investment institution, United Church Funds," said Jim Antal, Massachusetts Conference Minister. "This resolution becomes a model for all faith communities who care about God's creation and recognize the urgent scientific mandate to keep at least eighty percent of the known oil, gas and coal reserves in the ground....This vote expresses our commitment to the future."

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## UCC National Officers Re-Elected at General Synod

by Tim Kershner

As the United Church of Christ readies to live into a new reality of unified governance, three of the Officers of the Church were overwhelmingly re-elected by General Synod delegates.

Geoffrey Black was re-elected to serve a second four-year term as General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ.

Also elected to four-year terms were Linda Jaramillo as Executive Minister for Justice and Witness Ministries, and J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister for Local Church Ministries.

Geoffrey, Linda and Ben join James Moos, Executive Minister of Wider Church Ministries, in leading the denomination's national setting into the new unified structure. W. Mark Clark's term as Associate General Minister came to an end, and he begins his appointed role as UCC Chief Administrative Officer.



*Outgoing Covenanted Board members were recognized and incoming United Church Board members were installed on the last day of*

## In Memory

### Thomas Okuma

Thomas Okuma, 93, died May 22. Tom was pastor of churches in the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (now Hawai'i Conference UCC) from 1946 to 1949. He was also a missionary to Angola from 1950 to 1961 and later program secretary for racial and ethnic relations in the World Council of Churches. His surviving family includes daughters Yuki Okuma and Katy White, daughter-in-law Ann, two grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.



### Toiloto Tuisamatatele

Toiloto Tuisamatatele, 90, died July 10. Ordained in 2006, Toiloto served as Pastor of Church of the New Testament for 23 years. Prior to that he worked as a teacher in American Samoa and a social worker in Hawai'i. He received the Certificate of Ministry Studies from Pacific School of Religion in 1994.



*(‘Aha Pae’aina, continued from page 1)*

3. Elected new Conference Council members: David Iha (Lihu'e Christian), Vice-Chair; Linn Garcia (Windward UCC), Treasurer; Rod Chamberlain (Manoa Valley), Administration Missional Team Chair; Welina Tong (Ola'a First Hawaiian), Youth/Young Adult At-Large; and Aletha Kaohi (Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational), Formation Missional Team Chair.
4. Elected Brian Welsh (Haili Congregational) as the at-large member of the Nominating Committee.

Receipts from special offerings received at the 'Aha Pae'aina included \$1,337 for the Vesper Maile Ito Fund and \$1,237 benefitting Our Church's Wider Mission.

Visit [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) for more from the 'Aha Pae'aina, including photos, video of Allan Boesak's address, audio recordings of workshops, and a new video resource describing the ministries of Our Church's Wider Mission.

**T**hanks 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'uau Ave., Honolulu, HI 96817.

## Quotes from General Synod

*Hawai'i Conference delegates to General Synod shared their reflections of General Synod in a "real-time," on-line blog and through traditional words on paper. Below are excerpts of their thoughts. Visit the Hawai'i Conference website for more.*

"Being older and having graduated from high school I thought this event was going to be boring. But truth is, I don't think I will ever be too old to participate in these events. We learned a new song and dance called, "You're Welcomed Here." It's so awesome to be able to share aloha with other cultures and ethnicities!" **Welina Tong**

"It has been a day of learning about...the needs of returning veterans; sitting for the first plenary session that included learning to use the clicker to register the vote; getting freebies from the vendors in the exhibit hall; attending the evening worship with a powerful sermon given by Rev. Nichelle Guidry Jones. (My adrenalin is still pumping and it's time to go to sleep!)" **Roberta Jahrling**

"Worship at Synod is just plain 'wonderful': sights (colors, projected images), sounds (great hi-fi audio that pleasures the ears), movement (dance) and singing with the House Band. You can't help but be swept up in the mood and spirit." **Woody Kita**

"Just had a great time reconnecting with Paul Sherry who was General Minister and President of the UCC in 1993. This was an auspicious time for our denomination and our state as the Hawaiian people marked the Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. Paul sends out his heartfelt ALOHA to HCUC and remembers us fondly." **Kalani Wong**

"'Hope is a verb with its sleeves rolled up,' says David Orr, who is addressing Synod about the rising CO2 levels as measured at the Mauna Loa observatory on Hawai'i Island." **Charles Buck**

"Interestingly, the resolution for an all-church offering to support persons-in-discernment proved to be a highly debatable issue. Many argued that staggering debt for theological education might prevent graduates from becoming pastors because salaries for pastors could not easily wipe out their debt. On the other hand, people worried that [another special offering] might lessen giving. The debate revealed an urgency to solve this issue. Yet, all agreed that maintaining theological standards was important." **Aileen Trout**

"Though I don't know everyone [at Synod] I feel like I am part of something great and wonder-full. We really are a great denomination. We welcome everyone and though we may not always agree with each other we believe that through our prayers and work somehow the Spirit of God is among us. **Pearl Misa-Lau**



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## ***Around the Conference***

### **Conference Calendar of Events**

August 14	Hawaiʻi Conference Foundation Board of Trustees
August 16	Admissions Day observed (Office Closed)
August 18	Oʻahu Association Installation of Windward UCC Pastor
August 24	Church and Ministry Members Workshop
August 28	Stewardship Missional Team
September 2	Labor Day (Office Closed)
September 7	Conference Council
September 18	Hawaiʻi Conference Foundation Board of Trustees
September 21	Investors Workshop Tri-Isle ʻAha Makua
September 25	Stewardship Missional Team

### **Tips for Creating a Planned Giving Program**

**O**n July 16 more than twenty people from Hawaiʻi Conference churches gathered at the Conference Office for a planned giving workshop led by Jan Stricklin, Associate Vice President of University Advancement at Pacific University in Oregon. Here are some tips she shared with participants:

- Ask: Seventy percent of those who make a planned gift do so because they were asked.
- You must understand your case for support before asking others to support you.
- Don't fall into a scarcity mentality, but come at planned giving from an attitude of abundance.
- Start with church members who are already contributing to the church.
- Don't overlook those donors who have a modest lifestyle; it may indicate a focus on savings.
- A typical planned giving donor is over 70 years old.
- The average age of someone making a first will bequest is 45 years old.