

## Conference Prepares for 'Aha Pae'aina

Delegates from Hawai'i Conference churches and ministers will soon gather for the 192nd 'Aha Pae'aina.

The 'Aha Pae'aina will officially open June 3-5 with the 'Aha Iki for Hawaiian churches at Kalihi and Moanalua Church. "Stop! Look! Listen!" is this year's theme. The gathering will include a celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches.



Ministers celebrating ordination anniversaries are recognized at the 191st 'Aha Pae'aina.

On June 5, youth will gather for the 'Aha Youth Event at First Chinese Church of Christ. The event offers an opportunity for middle and high school youth to meet, interact, and inspire one another. Each church is eligible to send a youth delegate and is encouraged to send additional youth visitors to the 'Aha Youth Event, which runs concurrently with the 'Aha Makua. Kamehameha Schools Chaplain Kalani Wong will direct the event.

The 'Aha Makua, co-hosted by the O'ahu Association, will be held June 6-7 at First Chinese Church of Christ. The keynote

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## Giving Aloha, One Pint at a Time

Bryan Gomes, Bill Kinaka, and Herb Lum have collectively saved as many as 1,233 lives.

Recognized as "century donors" by the Blood Bank of Hawai'i (BBH), these three UCC members have each donated more than one hundred pints of blood. Because up to three lives can be saved for every pint of blood donated, their gifts have made a big impact. This is all the more significant when you consider that Hawai'i, according to BBH, has only 967 century donors, less than two thousandths of a percent of the state population.

Bryan, a member of Kailua Christian Church, has donated 109 pints to date, faithfully visiting BBH every 56 days, the maximum a person may donate.

"I got seriously committed the hard way," said Bryan. "My brother and only sibling, Pat, was diagnosed with leukemia at age 36. It was through his battle with leukemia, which he lost six years later, that I saw the importance of the blood donations that were being transfused into him. It extended his life."

Donating in his brother's memory, Bryan sees himself as a servant in Christ. "I am honored to be a servant to others," he said. "I encourage my friends to visit the blood bank and, in particular, to see the children who have life-threatening conditions. A simple blood donation can extend, if not save, their lives. To me, it's truly moving."

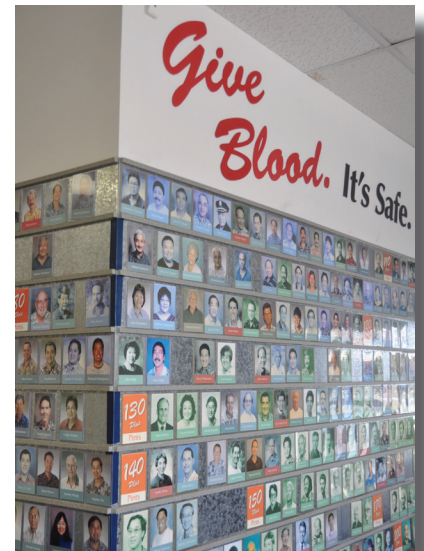
Bill, a member of Kahului Union Church, says that he was inspired to donate

when a youth in the church was diagnosed with leukemia. Terrified of blood since childhood, he closed his eyes during his first donation, shivering, sweating, and unsure what to expect. But after the blood was drawn, his fears disappeared.

"It was just the opposite of all the fears I had," Bill said. "It didn't hurt at all. It was the best thing I ever did."

A self-described "walking billboard" for BBH, Bill has recruited more than thirty, first-time donors and helped to collect 481 pints

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The wall of donors at the Blood Bank of Hawai'i recognizes those donors who give often.

## Second Childhood

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Not long ago my mother was received as a new member in her church. Afterwards, we talked about it over the phone, and she expressed some misgivings about the whole thing. A little surprised, I asked why. "Because," she said, "I don't have money to give them, and I'm too busy to work there."

Some background is in order: A couple years ago, we moved our mother from her home in Northern California to be nearer my sisters in Arizona. Her Alzheimer's was making independent living more challenging, and the retirement community we found for her offered increasing levels of assisted care as she would surely need over time.

Among the benefits at the community was shuttle service to and from the UCC church on Sunday mornings. Aside from the time when she lost track of the days and wondered one Saturday why the shuttle never showed up, she was a regular in the pews. One day, she was invited to membership classes, but her suspicions were aroused. Were they looking for money she didn't have? Were they trying to hire her for a job she didn't want?

Symptoms of Alzheimer's, to be sure. To help alleviate her anxiety, my sister attended the classes with her. Mom made it through and became a member.

My mother's experiences punctuated some of my recent Holy Week and Easter meditations. Thinking about how she is moving gradually but steadily from independent to assisted living, having to adjust to or accept increasing care and help from others, made me see how Jesus had to do much the same—to depend upon others—as he moved from Passover, through passion, and to death and resurrection. For example,

- he asked the disciples to stay with him in prayer (Matthew 26:38);
- he needed help from Simon the Cyrene to carry his cross (Matthew 27:32);
- he requested the "disciple whom he loved" to care for his mother (John 19:26-27);
- he cried out to God for help upon the cross (Mark 15:34); and,
- he had to be carried by Joseph of Arimathea from the cross to the tomb (Luke 23:53).

For most of us, as individuals, churches, or even nations, depending upon others or accepting help isn't easy, especially when we place a high value on independence or self-reliance, or are taught that "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). For my mother, deciding to give up driving, relocate to Arizona, move into a community and stop cooking for herself were all huge and difficult breakthroughs. But she



insists still on keeping the checkbook, buying us dinner when we visit, and not letting anyone de-clutter her apartment, all ways of maintaining some semblance of control.

We tend to view all this pathologically, as symptoms of a disease, whether we call it aging or Alzheimer's. But the passion story of Jesus suggests a different perspective, one that accepts help as not only necessary but natural, as if God actually intended for us not to live independently, but in dependence. Author and priest Henri Nouwen called it a "second childhood."

For the first twenty or so years of life, we depend on our parents, teachers, and friends. Forty years later, we again become increasingly dependent. The younger we are, the more people we need so that we may live; the older we become, the more people we again need to live. Life is lived from dependence to dependence. That's the mystery that God has revealed to us through Jesus, whose life was a journey from the manger to the cross....[a] journey from the first to the second childhood (*Our Greatest Gift: A Meditation on Dying and Caring* [HarperSanFrancisco, 1994], pp.14-15).

Nouwen cautioned that this second childhood is not a "second immaturity," as if to become little or weak like children, utterly helpless or blindly submissive. Instead, it is a "maturity [as] sons and daughters of God...chosen to inherit the Kingdom," or a new birth into dependence on God who frees us to live and die without fear.

This deep inner freedom allows us to confront our enemies, throw off the yoke of oppression, and build social and economic structures that allow us to live as brothers and sisters, as children of the one God whose name is love (*Our Greatest Gift*, pp.16-17).

The passion, then, is much more than the story of Jesus' journey to the cross or the inexorable march to his death. It is the example or witness of how we can live and die. The passion invites us to move from a slavery of self-reliance and selfish living to a freedom that comes from dependence on God and the interdependence on one another through mutual caring and love.

None of this comes easy or naturally. It means unlearning an independence we were taught and have lived so long. Some of us will end up learning this involuntarily as we age or suffer misfortune or accident. But for all of us, it can prove less a curse than a blessing when we practice loosening our grip on self-reliance and trusting in God's providence. In that is the joy of a second childhood.



God is still speaking

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## Workshop Explains ONA Process

Since 1985, more than 1,100 United Church of Christ churches have voiced their support of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people by adopting Open and Affirming (ONA) covenants in their congregations.

At a workshop on March 1 explaining the ONA process, Mike Schuenemeyer, UCC Minister for Health and Wholeness Advocacy, said there is currently incredible momentum behind the ONA movement, but added that discussing ONA can evoke controversy within congregations.



"Unfortunately in the church we don't tend to talk about things that create controversy, and sex is one of those taboo areas," Mike said. "For many it's not something that's even been talked about in the home, much less in our neighborhood or community. But people of faith ought to be able to find a way to talk about it."

The ONA workshop, held at the Hawai'i Conference Office and attended by thirty people from fourteen churches, taught participants how to engage a church congregation effectively in an ONA process, which could result in a congregation's publicly declaring its welcome and inclusion of people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions into the full life and ministries of the church.

Mike explained that one of the most important aspects of the formal eleven-step ONA process is creating an environment of hospitality and welcome. Understanding the continuum between exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality is helpful in order to cultivate this environment.

Mike explained that there are gradations of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and biological sex, which makes it crucial not to make assumptions about people. Transgender persons, for example, have a gender identity differing from the cultural expectations of their biological sex. Mike said a child once explained it to him as "a boy's body with a girl's heart or a girl's body with a boy's heart."

He recommended that churches embarking on an ONA journey, which typically takes one to two years to complete, assemble a core team of five to ten people to shepherd the process. This team, which should include LGBT-identified people if possible, adapts the process to fit best the values, culture, and history of the congregation. An ecumenical toolkit, "Building an Inclusive Church," guides the congregation through the process, and consultation from UCC national staff is also available.

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## ONA Churches Are On a Journey

*Three churches in the Hawai'i Conference are Open and Affirming (ONA). (See article on left to learn more about this process.) This article looks at how that process has affected these churches as they continue to make strong statements about their decisions to welcome all people.*

At the Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu, education, hospitality, and advocacy are key to being a welcoming church that celebrates the diversity of God's creation.

Education is critical to understanding lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) issues in the context of Christian faith. Years after the church went through the ONA process, Pastor Kyle Lovett encouraged the congregation to learn more and inspired some Crossroads members to attend a three-day "Biblical Self-Defense" course hosted by the UCC Coalition for LGBT Concerns.



*Members of Church of the Crossroads show off rainbow-colored bracelets as a way of celebrating diversity.*

"It was the most exciting and interesting course I've ever attended," said Crossroads member Ellen Godbey Carson.

Crossroads was once the only church in the Gay Pride parade specifically supporting LGBT equality, but in recent years other churches have now joined in these parades to show their love and support for civil rights and, more specifically, God's love for all, including the LGBT community.

For Iao United Church of Christ in Wailuku, Maui, a key moment that "opened our hearts was hearing the stories of parents whose children suffered discrimination because they were gay," says Pastor Jack Belsom. "Only those with hearts of stone could refuse to empathize with those parents who loved their children."

"That was followed by many sessions of Bible study, prayer, and conversation about what Christ was calling us to be and do. As we met and worked alongside folks who were open about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, we discovered that they were like us. If God could love us and accept us by the grace of Christ, who were we to deny that others were also God's beloved children and our sisters and brothers?"

The third church is Kana'ana Hou-Siloama in Kalaupapa, which became ONA "to stand up for the rights of all God's people," said Lon Rycraft, who was pastor at the time the decision was made. The members' "decision was rooted in Kalaupapa's aloha for all people who struggle for equality, be they children of God with Hansen's Disease, AIDS, or a different sexual identity."



## Hawai'i Island Association Welcomes Clergy for Retreat and Education

Clergy gathered at King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel from March 31 to April 2 for the Annual Clergy Retreat. Workshops on Boundary Training and the Psalms were held. Authorized ministers from churches throughout the Conference also enjoyed time for worship, fellowship and rest.





*(ONA Workshop, continued from page 3)*

To be listed as an ONA church, a welcoming covenant must be written and adopted by the church. It is recommended that this occur via a congregational vote with at least eighty percent of votes in favor. According to Mike, when the ONA process is properly followed, churches almost always adopt their ONA covenant; and the more grace abounds, he said, the more grace abounds.

“Congregations that become Open and Affirming find that their capacity for dealing with difficult issues in the life of their church and community is increased,” said Mike. “Congregations that go through Open and Affirming are then more likely to talk about other issues of inclusion such as race, age, or disability.”

The Hawai‘i Conference currently has three ONA churches: Church of the Crossroads (O‘ahu), Iao UCC (Maui), and Kana‘ana Hou-Siloama UCC (Moloka‘i). (To learn more about these churches, see sidebar on page 3.)

For more information about the ONA process, visit [www.ucc.org/lgbt/ona.html](http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/ona.html) or email Mike at [LGBT@ucc.org](mailto:LGBT@ucc.org).

*(‘Aha Preparations, continued from page 1)*

speaker will be Rita Nakashima Brock, who is founding Co-Director of the Soul Repair Center at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, and of Faith Voices for the Common Good.

Delegates will also participate in workshops, elect new Conference Council members, and vote on an amendment to the Conference bylaws regarding audit of financial statements. A workshop on the proposed 2015 budget will include an explanation of the bylaws amendment, which would allow the option of an annual review rather than an audit. Approval by two-thirds of the delegates will be required to pass the amendment.

Other workshops include one to be led by Don Hart, President of United Church Funds, an Associated Ministry of the UCC that manages investments for churches, associations, conferences and other UCC entities in a well-diversified and socially-responsible portfolio. Descriptions of additional workshops will be posted on the Hawai‘i Conference website at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

Information on the ‘Aha Pae‘aina and a notice of the proposed bylaws amendment were mailed to churches. The deadline to register is May 5. On-line registration is also offered at [ezregister.com/events/9392](http://ezregister.com/events/9392) for the ‘Aha Iki and [ezregister.com/events/9393](http://ezregister.com/events/9393) for the ‘Aha Makua. A late registration fee of \$30 will be assessed after May 5 for the ‘Aha Makua. Late registrations will be accepted until the close of business on May 27. Registrations for the ‘Aha Iki will not be accepted after May 5.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Pagoda Hotel, and ‘Aha participants should make reservations directly with the hotel using the form included with registration materials. Delegates and visitors are responsible for their own flight reservations and payments.

More information about the ‘Aha Pae‘aina is also available on the Hawai‘i Conference website. Additional documents will be posted as they become available.

*(Giving Aloha, continued from page 1)*

of blood—enough to save 1,443 lives. On April 25, he donated his 132nd pint. Bill said that because it is better to give than receive and because Jesus shed his blood to save us, it is our calling as Christians to donate.

“If I had to pay to donate blood, I would,” said Bill. “It’s the most important and meaningful activity I’ve been involved in over the last quarter century. As long as I can give, I’ll be giving.”

Sharing Bill’s and Bryan’s enthusiasm is Herb, a UCC—Judd Street member who has donated 170 pints of blood to date. He was recruited to donate when he worked at Hawaiian Telcom and has continued to donate well into retirement.

Herb encourages churches to be active in recruiting blood donors in their congregations. “If the telephone company didn’t approach me, I would never have donated,” he said.

According to BBH Marketing Director Maura Dolormente, two hundred blood donors are needed in Hawai‘i every day. Working with BBH, any church with at least 45 willing donors can organize a blood drive up to four times per year. A single church can save hundreds of lives annually.

“Churches are so critical for us because people at church care about the community,” said Maura. “Having a champion within the church who is willing to ask people to donate is really important. A message from the pulpit is so powerful.”

## resource List

### Invest in the Vision

“Invest in the Vision” is the theme of this year’s “Strengthen the Church” offering, one of four special missional offerings of the United Church of Christ. Gifts to this offering assist new church starts, awaken new ideas in existing churches, and develop spiritual life in youth and young adults.



Half of the offering stays in the Hawai‘i Conference to support Christian Investment Grants to churches for new ministries. The other half supports national ministries of the United Church of Christ.

The suggested offering date is Pentecost Sunday, June 8, 2014, although it may be received on any Sunday in the year. 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).

## Leaders Offer Prayers in Aftermath of Kansas Shooting

by Anthony Moujaes

Leaders from the United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are offering their sympathy and lifting up in prayer those affected by deadly shootings at two Jewish communities in Kansas. Three people were killed by gunfire on Sunday, April 13, in Overland Park, Kansas, including a grandfather and his 14 year-old grandson.

Geoffrey A. Black, UCC General Minister and President, and Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President of the Disciples of Christ, condemned the act and called on Christian leaders to denounce anti-Semitic notions, even those from Christian traditions, that threaten the safety of people of Jewish faith.

"It is our prayer in this season of Passover and Easter that God will deliver us from the slavery of anti-Semitism and from hatreds of all kinds that life may triumph over death and we all may know the glorious joy of freedom."

## Restoring Hope through the Congo Initiative

by Anthony Moujaes

Does anyone know we are here? Does anyone know what's going on?

Those appeals were frequent questions and thoughts of the people of the Congo, unsure if anyone knew or cared about the impact of their country's civil conflict that has resulted in six million deaths and countless victims of war crimes and hunger.



Thanks to the efforts of Global Ministries of the UCC and Disciples of Christ, churches in both denominations are recognizing the pleas of the Congolese and are standing in solidarity with them through the Global Ministries Congo Initiative, which helps nurse the sick, provide education and save lives.

"What we've been able to do just by starting the Congo Initiative has made it a success," said Sandra Gourdet, Global Ministries Area Executive for Africa. "It makes a difference. We hear them and feel their pain. We're doing this to show them we join and stand with you in your pain and suffering."

Global Ministries launched the Congo Initiative during the UCC's General Synod in 2013 as an eighteen-month period of focus and attention on an African nation stricken by human rights violations, mass genocide, and millions of preventable deaths.

"The overall message—the top priority—from churches in the Congo is prayer for peace," Sandra

said. "We've advocated to our leaders on Capitol Hill for an end of the war and to bring about peace."

According to Sandra, Global Ministries has raised about \$117,000 so far to support the Congo Initiative, funding four special projects that focus on hospitals, clean water, agriculture, and women's and children's issues.

## Fundraising Executive Chosen to Direct Philanthropy and Stewardship

by Anthony Moujaes

Cheryl Joseph Williams has a belief that giving in the church can be a spiritual calling, and starting in May she will work to strengthen the UCC's philanthropic efforts as the director of the Office of Philanthropy and Stewardship (OPS). Cheryl, who begins on May 1, is a certified fundraising executive with more than ten years of nonprofit development experience.

"I am excited about this opportunity to work with this community of faith to strengthen its culture of philanthropy—growing our resources to equip the church, its congregations, services and mission," Cheryl said. "Giving is a high calling, and philanthropy moves our giving from being transactional to relational."

In leading OPS, Cheryl will create and implement a comprehensive fundraising and development program for the national setting of the church.

"As Director of Philanthropy and Stewardship, my hope is that I can be an instrument to help nurture a philosophy that aligns the spirit of generosity to what it means to be in relationship with Christ [and] what it means to be available to God," Cheryl said.

## Scarf Project Embraces Runners

by Emily Schappacher

From California to Maine—and even all the way from France, England, and Germany—members and friends of the UCC sent hand-knit scarves by the thousands to the steps of Boston's Old South Church UCC. From this outpouring of support, Old South Church received nearly 5,500 scarves to distribute to runners of this year's Boston Marathon during its "Blessing of the Athletes" service on April 20.

"Originally, we had hoped for a few hundred," said Nancy Taylor, Senior Minister of Old South Church. Countless UCC churches participated in this initiative inspired by the Synod Scarf Project, which encouraged UCC members to send handmade, rainbow-colored scarves to General Synod 2013 in Long Beach, California, as a stand against the bullying of LGBT youth.

"Who knew that with skeins of wool and a lot of needles you could literally knit the world together?" Nancy said.

## Annual Gathering Brings Ministers Together

Over forty ministers from churches throughout the Hawai'i Conference gathered in Kona last month for the annual clergy retreat. Hosted by the Hawai'i Island Association, this year's retreat held at King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel featured two speakers: Don Dewey, Regional Co-Minister for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the Pacific Southwest Region; and Mary Susan Gast, retired Conference Minister of the Northern California Nevada Conference.

During the first half of the retreat, Don facilitated one group in boundary training, a continuing education opportunity for clergy to learn—and talk—about issues pertaining to boundaries between clergy and church members. Ministry is filled with times and situations where human relationships can become blurry. Boundary training is an opportunity for ministers to consider these situations in order to bring clarification and awareness in their pastoral roles.



Mary Susan Gast and retired minister Glenn Frazier exchange the waters of baptism during opening worship.

At the same time, a second group of participants experienced Psalms with Mary Susan. She discussed the formation of individual psalms into several large collections that make up the current Book of Psalms in the Bible, and she provided background on many of the psalms. Participants read both from the Bible and from Mary Susan's own "descants," or interpretive paraphrases.

After a day of rest and relaxation, the two groups exchanged places so that during the three-day event everyone was able to experience both tracks of continuing education offerings.

This annual retreat offers an opportunity for ministers from all islands to gather for continuing education, conversation, and rest. Photos from the event can be viewed on page 4 and at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

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'uanu Ave., Honolulu 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.

### Conference Council Prepares for 'Aha

The Conference Council, which met on April 5 at the Conference Office, heard updates and reports from the Conference Minister, Missional Teams and Associations and discussed communication of the work of the Council and teams. The Council also took the following actions:

- Appointed PKF Pacific Hawaii as independent auditor for the 2014 audit
- Changed Kenneth Makuakane's job title to Commissioned Minister for Church Vitality
- Approved changes to the Personnel Handbook (for Conference Office staff)
- Nominated Kealahou Alika to a second, four-year term as HCF trustee (for election at the 'Aha Pae'aina)
- Recommended approval of the 2015 budget and an amendment to Conference bylaws

The Council also convened as members of the Hawai'i Conference Foundation and took the following actions:

- Appointed PKF Pacific Hawaii as independent auditor for the HCF 2014 audit
- Approved the 2015 budget
- Received notice of a proposed amendment to HCF bylaws to be voted on in June

For more information, contact Council Chair Roberta Jahrling ([rmjahrling@gmail.com](mailto:rmjahrling@gmail.com)) or Conference Minister Charles Buck ([cbuck@hcucc.org](mailto:cbuck@hcucc.org)).

### Pastoral Changes

**Shiro Timothy** retired from Honolulu Kosraean Etawi on December 31, 2013.

**Jeff Glass** began as Interim Minister of Church of the Pacific in Princeville, Kaua'i, on March 23.

**David Kieffer** began as Minister of Lili'uokalani Protestant Church on April 1.

**Youlida Yoruw** concluded her service as Licensed Minister for the Micronesian ministry at Iao UCC on March 31.

**Jeff Crews** began as Minister of Waiola Church on April 15.





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May 2014

## Around the Conference

### Conference Calendar of Events

May 2-3	Kauaʻi ʻAha Mokupuni
May 3	Tri-Isle ʻAha Mokupuni
May 10	Oʻahu ʻAha Mokupuni
May 26	Memorial Day Holiday (Office Closed)
May 31	Hawaiʻi Island ʻAha Mokupuni
June 3-7	192nd ʻAha Paeʻaina
June 3-5	ʻAha Iki
June 6-7	ʻAha Makua
June 11	Kamehameha Day Holiday (Office Closed)
June 29- July 3	Western Regional Youth Event

### Tips to Prepare for the ʻAha Paeʻaina

The ʻAha Paeʻaina is right around the corner! Here are some tips to help prepare for this important gathering of churches and ministers of the Hawaiʻi Conference.

- Avoid the late registration fee and register by the May 5 deadline. If you miss the deadline, registrations (with late fee added) will be accepted only until May 27. Registration for the ʻAha Iki ends May 5.
- Don't forget to name a youth delegate!
- Encourage other youth in your church to attend, and make sure they all register for the ʻAha Youth Event.
- Submit housing registration directly to the Pagoda Hotel by the May 5 deadline.
- Make airline reservations early.
- Download the ʻAha Handbook (beginning May 19).
- Check the Conference website [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) for updates and new information as they become available.
- Review business items in advance.