

## 'Aha Keynote to Focus on Transformation

Transforming the world begins with transforming ourselves. That's the message that the Pū'ā Foundation, this year's 'Aha Pae'aina keynote presenter, wants to impart in its ongoing work toward reconciliation.



Former women prisoners share a hula at a community transformation program sponsored by Pū'ā Foundation.

Pū'ā Foundation was established in 1996 as part of the UCC's apology and redress in 1993 to Native Hawaiians for the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom a hundred years earlier. Toni Bissen, Executive Director, said the purpose of the Pū'ā Foundation is to help the community move beyond the anger related to the overthrow toward healing and transformation.

This anger, says Roberta Jahrling, member of the Pū'ā board and Kaumakapili Church, began when Queen Lili'uokalani was deposed in 1893 and endured imprisonment afterwards. Her trauma has lingered in the community to this day and affects people in ways that are not always apparent. "That ripple effect carries through generations and is what we are dealing with today," she explained.

Pū'ā has been studying the effects of this historical trauma with female prisoners in Hawai'i. Though Native Hawaiian women

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## First Pohnpeian Looks at Ten Years as Police Officer

Mitchell Neth, a member of Waipahu UCC, has been spending a lot of time reflecting these days as he nears his tenth anniversary in the Honolulu Police Department (HPD). Mitchell, who came to Hawai'i from Pohnpei in 1990 and earned a master's degree in criminal justice from Chaminade University, was the first person from the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) to become an HPD officer.



In 1986, the United States signed the Compact of Free Association (COFA) allowing Micronesians to live in the United States without a visa or green card and to receive government benefits. In the early 1990s, when Mitchell was still in college, the Micronesian population in Hawai'i was small but growing. Today, thirty percent of Micronesians in America have settled in Hawai'i, and some see Micronesians as a burden and drain on resources.

"I first learned about discrimination in Hawai'i when entering the police department," Mitchell said. "Some officers think all Micronesians are bad. I tell them we only meet Micronesians who commit crimes because that's our job."

While Mitchell has experienced some prejudice at work, he is pleased to report that some of his colleagues no longer negatively stereotype Micronesians. "I've been able to educate the people I work with, and I believe some guys respect me now," he said.

The son of a Pohnpeian pastor, Mitchell has attended church all his life. He currently serves on the Board of Trustees at Waipahu UCC and volunteers in a food distribution ministry to the elderly. He said he joined a multicultural church so that he may be a cultural ambassador to the wider Christian community. It is one way to overcome his concern that "nobody takes the time to find Micronesians who are doing good things."

"If I can make more people believe that there are good Christian Micronesians, then they can help spread the word that not all Micronesians are bad," he said. "The church is also a source of hope for us because all people are equal under God."

Mitchell said the answer to prejudice must be education. He has made it a personal mission to inform people that

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## Over-Protective Walls

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

At what age may a kid walk home alone?

A Maryland couple was recently told that 10 is not old enough. Local police picked up their ten year-old son and six year-old daughter walking home from the park, and Child Protective Services threatened to take the kids away if the parents didn't sign a "safety pledge" promising not to leave them unsupervised.



Not surprisingly, this prompted vigorous public debate, both on-line and off. It strikes a deep chord for parents—including me—who struggle to figure out not only when their kids are ready to walk home alone, but also to stay at home, ride a bus, drive a car, or fly on a plane!

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*“Our” children are really God’s gifts, entrusted to us for a short time to raise up and then one day release.*

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Personally, I find 10 and 6 a little young to walk home alone whether or not they have to cross busy city streets as these Maryland kids were doing. Ask my son and daughter, who are now old enough to do everything alone, and they may tell you that I tended to be over-protective, maybe verging on paranoia. Only recently have I stopped instinctively reaching for their hands to hold onto as we walk through a parking lot or cross a busy street!

But being over-protective, even if motivated out of love, is not, well, very loving, a point made by a mother who—gasp!—let her nine year-old ride the New York subway all alone.

We become so bent out of shape over something as simple as letting your children out of sight on the playground that it starts seeming on par with letting them play on the railroad tracks at night. In the rain. In dark non-reflective coats.

The problem with this everything-is-dangerous outlook is that over-protectiveness is a danger in and of itself. A child who thinks he can't do anything on his own eventually can't (Lenore Skenazy, *New York Sun*, April 1, 2008).

Thinking about all this made me realize that churches struggle with a similar question. Whether church is an individual congregation or a collective entity like the UCC, there is the same competing tendency that parents have to reconcile: protecting what we love versus letting go out of love.

As much as we love our children, we would not have their best interest in mind if we tried to build protective walls around them, shielding them from life's harms. "Our" children are really God's

gifts, entrusted to us for a short time to raise up and then one day release so they can live into the fullness God destined for them. And we do so by right-sizing our walls, that is, gradually tearing them down so that our kids may encounter and learn from new experiences.

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*The church is really a means to accomplish God’s mission, a tool to build God’s kingdom.*

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In the same way, the church we cherish is not ours to hold on to and preserve. The more we try to keep church the way we remember, protecting all our buildings, history, legacies, traditions, or beliefs, the more it will slip away from us. The church is really a means to accomplish God's mission, a tool to build God's kingdom, and it's when we release our hold and give freedom to the creation of ministries that the church will retain its vitality and give life to each new generation of believers.

There's no question that ultimately we cannot hold on to either our kids or our churches in the end. Kids will rebel, and churches will die instead. It's in the paradox of love, in taking the risk of tearing down our walls of protection that children mature and churches grow. Of course, doing so may induce anxiety, stress and lots of sleepless nights. But the rewards far outweigh the risks.

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

comprise 19.8% of the general population, they represent 40% of incarcerated women. Pū‘ā has discovered that the cycle of poverty and community trauma are two reasons why Hawaiian women are overrepresented in the prison population.

At the ‘Aha, Toni and her staff, along with current and former women prisoners, will share how Pū‘ā has helped women use storytelling as a way to bring healing and transformation that break the cycle of poverty and imprisonment. Pū‘ā hopes that its model will enable individuals and churches to create transformation in their own families and communities.

In addition to keynote presentations, workshops will be offered on a variety of topics. More information about the ‘Aha Pae‘aina, to be held June 12-13, 2015, at the Pagoda Hotel in Honolulu, will be mailed to churches and posted online in March.



God is still speaking

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## Introducing General Synod Delegates

*Thirteen delegates will represent the Hawai'i Conference at General Synod 30 to be held June 26-30 in Cleveland, Ohio. The article below introduces five of the delegates. The remaining will be featured in the next two issues of The Friend.*



**Jayne Ryan Kuroiwa** (O'ahu Association) is Pastor of Windward UCC. This will be her first General Synod. "Coming from a background in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I am familiar with that denomination's General Assemblies and am curious to see the uniqueness of General Synods," she said. "My hometown

is just outside of Cleveland, so I'll be happy to be an informal tour guide."

**Kalani Wong** (Tri-Isle Association), Chaplain at Kamehameha Schools Maui, serves on the Formation Missional Team and is a past president of the Tri-Isle Association. This is his second Synod. He says he appreciated seeing the diversity of the UCC at his first Synod. "The variety of worship styles, ethnicities, and theological viewpoints were all present, yet we could all be one, much like what the motto of the UCC stands for," he said. "There were those times of pushback to ideas, but that was expected for it showed the passion by which we live our faith."



**Glenn Frazier** (Kaua'i Association) is a retired minister. He was most recently Pastor of Church of the Pacific on Kaua'i. He has served on the Hawai'i Conference Council and the Formation Missional Team. He is the Team Coordinator for the Kaua'i Association's Waineke Cabins and owner of Clock Repair of Kaua'i. He has never been to Synod—or

Cleveland. "I am anticipating the resources, worship, and inspiration which I am sure will be part of the General Synod," he said.

**Haleaka Martin** (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches) is Vice-President of Hawai'i Pacific Islander Asian American Ministries and a member of Kalihi and Moanalua Church on O'ahu. She is a Christian Endeavor Hawai'i board member, church delegate to the State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches, and a former board member of the Woman's Board of Missions. This will be her first General Synod.



**Michael Warren** (Hawai'i Island Association) is licensed minister at Kalapana Maunakea Church. He is chair of the AHEC Church and Ministry Committee, Hawai'i Island Association treasurer, and a Christian Endeavor Hawai'i board member. This will be his second Synod. "What I brought back from the last General Synod is that our church is part of something so

much greater than we imagine," he said. "People all around the United States are doing great things, and there is a wider ministry that continues to work."

### Register Now for Church Leaders Event

**G**erald Clay, Board President of Mediation Center of the Pacific, will keynote the annual Church Leaders Event to be held at Nu'uano Congregational Church (2651 Palī Highway) in Honolulu on February 28.

Mediation is becoming a preferred alternative to lawsuits because it saves money, resolves issues quickly, and allows parties to preserve relationships by coming up with their own creative solutions. In addition to the keynote address, Gerald will co-lead a workshop with Tracey Wiltgen, Executive Director of Mediation Center of the Pacific, about utilizing mediation in churches.

The event will include workshops helpful to moderators, treasurers, trustees, committee chairs, officers, youth leaders, and other church leaders. Topics such as worship planning, treasurer's responsibilities, leading with joy, resources for Bible studies, and insurance will be covered.

Cost to attend is \$25 for O'ahu participants, \$85 for neighbor island participants (which includes airfare). Registration forms were mailed to churches. To register online, go to [ezregister.com/events/12049/](http://ezregister.com/events/12049/). Deadline to register is February 11.

## Kalemela Church Honors Former Pastor



Descendants of Charles Moses Kamakawiwoole, pastor of Kalemela Church in Honoka'a, Hawai'i Island, from 1888 to 1931, gathered at the church in November 2014 to honor him by placing a framed portrait of the pastor in the church.

## Nanakuli Samoan Celebrates Fifty Years



Samoan Church of Hawai'i, LMS Nanakuli celebrated its 50th anniversary this past November with a worship and program. Iese Tuuaio is the Pastor and also the Chair of the Hawai'i Conference Council.

## O'ahu Churches Learn About Domestic Violence

Statistics show that for every three people sitting in church on any given Sunday one of them will be a victim of domestic violence. This means that it is important for clergy and lay leaders to have training in domestic violence awareness and to consider how worship practices and the use of language can contribute to the problem.

This was the message shared at the O'ahu Association's 'Aha Mokupuni in November 2014 by Al Miles, Pacific Health Ministry chaplain serving at the Queen's Medical Center in Honolulu. He is a recognized expert on issues of domestic violence and has written several books on the topic.

Al told his audience that domestic violence crosses all socioeconomic lines and is not limited to physical abuse. Abuse can be verbal, sexual, emotional, psychological or spiritual. Domestic violence, he said, is defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in which a person uses coercion, deception, harassment, humiliation, manipulation and/or force to establish and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. Females are more likely than males to be victims of abuse.

"Most men are not batterers, but most batterers are men," said Al. He said that churches can play important roles in two areas: domestic violence prevention and victim advocacy.

In the first, churches can learn how Christian teachings of male privilege and female subjugation, and scriptural interpretation that supports male privilege and female subjugation, contribute to domestic violence. As an example, he offered language used in the church that says or implies that God has given authority to men over women; men are to be the head of the household; women should be submissive to their husbands.

The second, victim advocacy, begins with church leaders knowing their limits. "Clergy and laity have an important role, but it is a role with limits," he said.

For example, clergy should not provide marriage counseling unless qualified to do so, and they should never suggest couples counseling if abuse is suspected. Domestic violence is not about a couple struggling with issues in their marriage, but about the power and control of the abuser over the abused. Couples counseling only endangers the victim more, said Al.

Clergy or lay leaders should also not confront a batterer about his behavior. This can make the situation worse and put the victim in even more danger.

The safety of the victim should always be the top priority. Christians in particular often talk about "keeping the family together" or "repairing the marriage." Before any of that can even be considered, a perpetrator must be held fully and solely accountable for his actions and behavior, successfully complete an offender-specific program and demonstrate that the abuse has stopped.

Helping a victim create a safety plan that can be implemented when the abuse occurs or escalates, listening to the victim's story (and believing it), and accompanying a victim-survivor to court are all helpful ways clergy and lay leaders can support those in their congregations facing domestic violence.

For links to resources distributed at the 'Aha Mokupuni, visit [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).



## Clergy Retreat to Discuss World Religions



*This year's clergy retreat features opportunities for worship like this one pictured here from last year's retreat.*

"Christian Theology of World Religions" will be the focus of this year's Hawai'i Conference Clergy Retreat, taking place on Hawai'i Island from March 9 to 11. All Hawai'i Conference clergy are invited to attend the retreat at Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel in Kailua-Kona.

The retreat program, which will explore central issues of Christian theology and its relation to the religious "other," will be led by four renowned scholars and church people:

**Paul F. Knitter**, Professor Emeritus of Theology, World Religions, and Culture at Union Theological Seminary in New York, is recognized as a leading figure in the field of world religions and is the author of numerous books and articles.

**Dale Bishop**, former Executive Minister of UCC Wider Church Ministries and a Middle East scholar, has written extensively on Iran, Lebanon, and Israeli-Palestinian issues, and has been a member of World Council of Churches delegations engaged in dialogue with Iranian Muslim religious leaders.

**Damayanthi Niles**, Professor of Constructive Theology at Eden Theological Seminary, teaches in the areas of interfaith studies, comparative theology, contextual theology with particular interest in Asia, and language of theology in a landscape of conflict and violence.

**David Greenhaw**, President of Eden Theological Seminary and Professor of Preaching and Worship, is a frequent speaker, preacher and retreat leader. He recently lectured and preached in Ghana, taught at the Near East School of Theology in Beirut, Lebanon, and participated in a World Council of Churches conference on Christians in the Middle East.

The retreat will launch the Armin and Shirley Limper Program in World Religion of Eden Theological Seminary. The Limpers, members of Waipahu UCC and former UCC missionaries, have provided resources to Eden Seminary to create a series of events that will deepen how the wider church community understands and engages with other world religions and religious people.

A \$65 registration fee covers materials and two dinners. Airfare and hotel are not included. Registration forms have been sent to all clergy. Registration and payment must be received at the Hawai'i Conference office before 4 p.m. on February 10 to guarantee registration. A \$25 late fee will be assessed after this date. Registration information is also available at [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org).

## resource List

### Contribute to Henry Opukaha'ia Scholarship Offering

Each year churches in the Hawai'i Conference are invited to contribute to the Henry Opukaha'ia Scholarship, which provides financial assistance to Members in Discernment (candidates for ministry) attending an accredited seminary and to clergy pursuing continuing education.



Since 2004, ninety Henry Opukaha'ia Scholarship recipients have been awarded a total of \$82,446. Thirty-nine people have received seminary scholarships, and fifty-one have attended continuing education workshops and clergy retreats with money received from this scholarship.

Churches are invited to collect the offering on the Sunday closest to the anniversary of the death of Henry Opukaha'ia, the young Hawaiian credited with inspiring the Sandwich Islands mission that brought Christianity to Hawai'i in the nineteenth century. This year that day falls on February 15, though churches may choose to collect on another date.

### Give and Change the World



Earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunami and other disasters occur with increased frequency throughout the world. When tragedy strikes, the United Church of Christ is there.

Gifts from UCC church members to One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), one of four special mission offerings of the UCC, are used to provide immediate, emergency grants to communities that have experienced the impact of a disaster. OGHS gifts are also used for recovery work in hard-hit areas and for development work in countries throughout the world.

OGHS is not a new offering but has been around for almost seven decades. The 2015 theme is "Give and Change the World—It Really Is That Simple." Resources for promoting this offering can be found at [www.ucc.org/oghs](http://www.ucc.org/oghs). The suggested date for receiving the OGHS offering is March 15. However, churches may choose to receive this offering at any time during the year.

These news briefs, written by Anthony Moujaes, 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).

## Extravagant Welcome Awaits at Bethany Beyond the Jordan

Along the banks of the Jordan River, at Bethabara, Jordan, sits a church where UCC people and others can come to visit, meditate and reflect. Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the United Church of Christ Church Building and Loan Fund (CB&LF) to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), visitors from Protestant traditions now have a house of worship to call their own at Bethany Beyond the Jordan.

Bethany Beyond the Jordan is the location where John the Baptist baptized Jesus in the Jordan River.

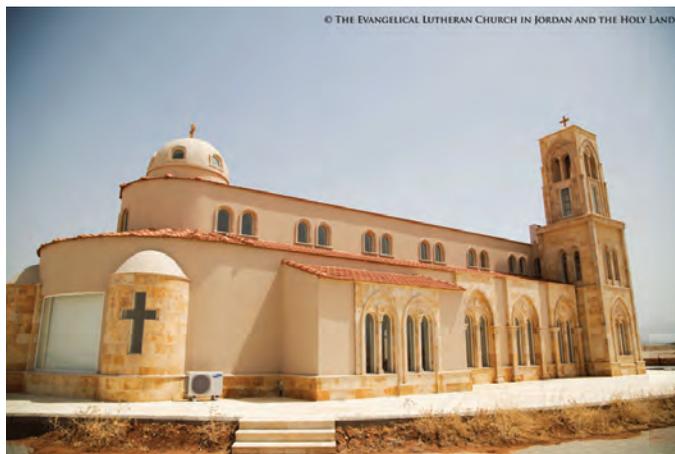


Photo by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land

CB&LF sent the grant in December in time for Christmas. The money helped support the final cost of construction, which began in 2012 and wrapped up in January 2014.

“It’s an international project, connected to the UCC, and an important message that we stand with our Christian brothers and sisters in parts of the world where being a church is difficult,” said Patrick Duggan, CB&LF Executive Director.

“It’s a congregation where the Evangelical Lutheran Church can shine a light to the world at the site of Jesus’ baptism,” said Peter Makari, UCC Area Executive for the Middle East and Europe. “Visitors to Bethany Beyond the Jordan come from a variety of traditions—there are already Orthodox churches there—and now this is a place where people can visit and feel that it’s theirs and identify with it.”

The ELCJHL inaugurated the church and pilgrim center on January 6, 2014. The land was donated by King Abdallah II of Jordan to be used as a site for a church.

“The church’s presence is an invitation to visit and connect in the Middle East, to learn about our witness there,” said Peter.

## UCC Merges Faith and Action in 2014

On November 1, United Church Funds launched a fossil-fuel-free investment fund in response to a 2013 General Synod resolution seeking to lessen the impact of fossil fuels on climate change through shareholder engagement, divestment and other strategies. The church was the first denomination to take this step.

Beyond Fossil Fuels Fund, which is free of investments in U.S. companies extracting or producing fossil fuels, began with more than \$20 million in seed money from UCC churches, conferences and agencies.

“As stewards of God’s creation, we must continue to grow in our commitment to initiatives like this if we are to have a sustainable future on earth,” said Geoffrey A. Black, UCC General Minister and President. “The United Church of Christ’s support of this fund will make it possible for others to follow.”

## Global Ministries Ready for Partnership with Cuban Churches

Surprised by the news that the United States would end five decades of sanctions against Cuba, leaders of the United Church of Christ are looking forward to an opportunity to work more closely with partners from the island nation.

It also marks an opportunity for the UCC to build and strengthen relationships with the Cuban ecumenical community that will benefit the people of both countries.

“Despite the embargo, we’ve been able to work with our partners in Cuba. Certainly with this welcome news, we look forward to working even closer with our partners in the future, however that may be,” said James (Jim) Moos, Executive Minister of UCC Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive of Global Ministries.

President Barack Obama announced on December 18 that the governments of both nations would normalize their diplomatic and commercial relations, expanding American opportunities for travel and trade. The decision finally ended an embargo that dates back fifty years to an era of the Cold War when the two nations were on the brink of conflict.

Jim said the announcement “was something that we were not expecting, but it is something that we are celebrating.”

Global Ministries—the shared ministry of the UCC and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—has four partners in Cuba: Centro Memorial Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Concilio de Iglesias de Cuba (CIC), Evangelical Seminary of Theology, and Iglesia Cristiana Pentecostal de Cuba (ICPC).

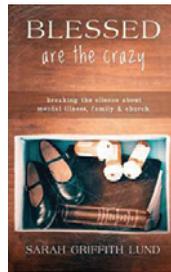
Other ecumenical organizations in the U.S. hailed the news that normal relations would resume between the two countries, thankful for the work of the faith community in the process.

“We are pleased that our churches played a part in leading the way to the events of this week,” the National Council of Churches and Cuban Council of Churches said in a joint statement. “We are grateful also for the witness of those who tirelessly work for reconciliation.”

## Book Seeks to Break Silence about Mental Illness

Book Review by Donald Schmidt

Unlike Sarah Griffith Lund, author of *Blessed Are the Crazy*, I did not grow up with a father with serious mental illness as she did, nor do I have a brother with serious bipolar disorder, nor a cousin who was executed after murdering someone in a rage as a result of far too many years of mental and physical abuse. Yet I could relate to her story, my own life and family having been touched by mental illness.



Lund, in the sharing of her upbringing and her crises of faith, describes her process of coming to the deep realization that “faith is waiting in pain for God’s presence to be known” (p. 80).

Numerous times she reminds us that “mental illness cannot be wished or prayed away” (p. 102), although an astonishing one-third of Americans firmly believe that. Thirty-five percent of the population in this country also believes that mental illness can be addressed—and often only addressed—through Bible study and prayer. She repeatedly argues that there is no truth to that. “Viewing mental illness only as a spiritual disease contributes to the stigma and shame of people who suffer from mental illness” (p. 84).

The book is not long—barely a hundred pages, mostly filled with stories of her own family, and much of that not always pretty. In the last chapters, she preaches—which at that point is fitting and welcome—offering helpful ways for churches to respond. Included is a brief appendix of suggestions for starting ministries to support those affected by mental illness and a list of helpful websites.

*Blessed Are the Crazy: Breaking the Silence about Mental Illness, Family, and Church* by Sarah Griffith Lund (Chalice Press, 2014).

*(Waipahu UCC Member Reflects, continued from page 1)*

stereotypes such as Micronesians being “lazy and violent” discount many hard workers and entrepreneurs, and that Micronesians are not the first, but just the latest, immigrant group to face discrimination in Hawai‘i.

In HPD, Mitchell is one of only twenty-nine motorcycle officers, as well as only one of two from the FSM. He hopes that his success will be an inspiration for the entire Micronesian community. Through hard work and education, he said others can follow their dreams and eventually help reverse prejudice toward them.

“My goal is to move as far up the chain in the police department as possible, to help other Micronesians by being that good example,” he said. “I want to represent where I’m from in a positive light on this island.”



## 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 Changes Aha Pae‘aina Dates

At its November 2014 meeting, the Conference Council announced the following dates and locations for the 193rd ‘Aha Pae‘aina (which is a change from information announced at last year’s ‘Aha).

The ‘Aha Makua (annual meeting of the Hawai‘i Conference) will be held June 12-13, 2015, at the Pagoda Hotel in Honolulu.

The ‘Aha Iki of the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches and affiliate organizations will be held June 10-11, 2015, at Kawaiaha‘o Church.

Information and registration will be mailed to churches and ministers in March.

### Pastoral Changes

*Ruth Farrell* resigned as Chaplain of Kamehameha Schools Hawai‘i Campus. Her last day was December 19, 2014. In January, she began an interim ministry in Pennsylvania.

*Jeff Glass* ended as Interim Minister of Church of the Pacific (Kaua‘i) on December 31, 2014.

*Barry Mick* became Pastor of Kapa‘a First Hawaiian Church on January 1, 2015. Previously, he was Associate Pastor of Trinity United Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Georgia.

*Clement Malani* retired as Kahu of Laupahoehoe Congregational Church on January 4, 2015.

The Church and Ministry Committee of the Hawai‘i Island Association terminated the ordained ministerial standing of *Dean Kauka* as the result of a fitness review. He ended his ministry at Imiola Church on December 1, 2014.

### Services of Installation Held

*David Kieffer* was installed as Pastor of Lili‘uokalani Protestant Church on Saturday, November 22.

*Sarah Jones* was installed as Pastor of Lana‘i Union Church on Saturday, January 17.

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, HI 96817.



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# Around the Conference

## Conference Calendar of Events

February 6	Formation Missional Team
February 7	Conference Council
February 16	President's Day (Conference Office Closed)
February 20-21	AHEC 'Aha Halawai
February 28	Church Leaders Event
March 4	Administration Missional Team
March 9-11	Clergy Retreat
March 21	AHEC Board of Directors
March 26	Kuhio Day (Conference Office Closed)
April 2-3	Maundy Thursday/Good Friday (Conference Office Closed)
April 11	Conference Council
April 25	Hawai'i Island 'Aha Moku-puni

## Tips For Faithful, Respectful Discussion

*Good communication is vital to a healthy congregation. These tips offer suggestions for how to listen and speak in a way that promotes healthy conversation, even when there is disagreement. Visit [http://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote\\_discussion](http://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote_discussion) for more.*

- Follow the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"—even when you disagree with them.
- Realize that the Holy Spirit is present and active in the conversation and has given each participant a part of the truth you are seeking to discern.
- Listen respectfully and carefully to others.
- Focus on ideas and suggestions instead of questioning people's motives, intelligence or integrity.
- Lift up points of agreement as well as disagreement.
- Create space for everyone's concerns to be spoken, even when they disagree.
- Keep an open mind and heart. You may not hear if you judge too quickly.
- Pray for God's grace to listen attentively, to speak clearly and to remain open to the vision God holds for all of us.