

HAWAII CONFERENCE
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



The Friend

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ONE 'OHANA

UNIFIED • RADIANT • TRANSFORMING

As we move through these seasons of Advent and Christmas, the Editorial Team of the Hawai'i Conference invites our readers to reflect theologically upon the reality of fatigue. From the stories of Moses to the parable of the maidens with their lanterns, fatigue is held up as a faith issue in our scriptures.

Fatigue goes beyond physical tiredness; it is an emotional and spiritual state that, if left unaddressed, can lead to a deep sense of hopelessness. It is especially during these seasons that we are called upon to embody the hope of the Christ Child.

Amid the busyness of both our church and personal calendars, we must open ourselves to the renewal and refreshment that God offers in form of a newborn. In this issue, we hear from Linda Petrucelli, who is a retired ordained minister on Hawai'i Island; Ben Sheets, the pastor of Lāna'i Union Church; Phyllis Meighen, retired ordained minister on Kaua'i; and Jonathan Roach, Associate Conference Minister, as they reflect upon fatigue, life, hope, and faith. In addition, David Popham considers a spirituality of reconcili-



Puka'ana Church

ation, Andy Bunn writes about the upcoming move for the Conference and Foundation, and finally we hear from some of our seasoned clergy on their wisdom to live out sustainable ministry.

We hope you enjoy this issue! Mele Kalikimaka e Hau'oli Makahiki Hou!

Acknowledging Our Fatigue

LINDA PETRUCELLI, HOKULOA UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

I'm tired of still wearing a mask in public. I'm tired that my friends at Takata's Grocery don't see my smile. I'm tired of lipstick smudges and fogged up glasses. Inhaling odd mouth odors. Swallowing unrecycled breath. I'm tired of the way the ear straps make my cranium ache at the seams.



PHOTO CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

While vaccines and antivirals have created new freedom in public spaces, I still wear a mask to safeguard the health of higher risk loved ones in my life. After nearly three years shopping with my mouth and nose covered, I am pretty tired of it. When I slip on my mask before stopping by the bank, I slam the car door behind me exhausted by the thought that I'm still not in the place to shed this pandemic holdover behavior.

There is, of course, a traditional wisdom in acknowledging our fatigue. American society tends to

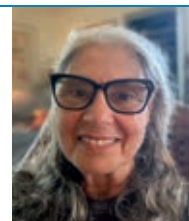
deny or dismiss this vulnerability. When I lived in Taiwan, everyone from students to shopkeepers would flop their heads down on their desks and take a snooze right in the open. Expats seeing this didn't know whether to be appalled or envious. But fatigue really isn't shameful, doesn't have to be hidden. Being tired isn't necessarily a character flaw.

Our fatigue—mental, physical, or spiritual—tells us something important, I think. That the time has come to reevaluate the enterprise of our lives and to pay attention to our need for renewal. To take time, shift attention, reframe.

Practicing Advent can help. There is solace for the weary in the sharp smell of pine, haunting hymns in a minor key, and candles blazing stars in the darkness. No forced gaiety or need to buy anything, Advent spirituality allows us to lament and wear the color purple. For me, there is comfort in hanging banners of Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. There is comfort in a little child to lead us.

No doubt I will continue to don a mask in public places, and I'm certain my KN95 will continue to wear on me. Thank God Advent opens a way

to stay the course and find revival, undeterred to Bethlehem.



Linda is a retired ordained minister in the Hawai'i Conference who served churches in Hilo and Honomu. She is a member of Hokuloa United Church of Christ. In retirement she writes and publishes personal essays in literary magazines. Her essays have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. View her online portfolio at lindapetrucelli.com.



God is still speaking

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A Thrill of Hope in the Midst of a Weary World

BEN SHEETS, PASTOR, LĀNA'I UNION CHURCH



My father died during the Advent season a few years ago. I remember being tired a lot. In the days sitting by his bedside waiting for the last breath to be taken. In the days and weeks after the funeral when I had returned home to so-called “normal” life. My mind was foggy, and I couldn’t conjure up the creativity I was used to. Waking up for my usual morning run seemed an impossible task. I wasn’t “doing” anything extra or physically extraneous. I was simply tending to life. But a life laced with grief.

Living with grief is exhausting. We are a society, a Church, a people living with grief.

We’ve lost friends and family. We’ve lost community. We’ve lost trust in our institutions and leaders. We’ve lost years. Sometimes I think we want to pretend the past 3 years didn’t happen. We want to move past the grief and go back to the way things were.

But if we’re honest with ourselves, our grief reaches further back than March 2020. Our exhaustion is rooted in the aging of our churches, the decline of our influence in society, and the ongoing isolation we feel from our communities.

We are exhausted because we are being forced to do more with less: less people, less money, less resources, less cultural influence.

Leaders are expected to ensure the institutions, which we have built up and invested in, are perpetuated even as they decline. At the same time leaders are supposed to innovate, reach out to new audiences, and provide the answers for what is next even when they are unsure themselves.

This tension is not sustainable.

Living with these grief-laced lives, we are left lamenting for what was. It feels as if we have fallen into a well and all we can do is wear ourselves out trying to climb back up to where we were.

In this season of Advent, we are a people who have a thrill of hope in the midst of a weary world. Right here in our exhaustion, in our fatigue, in our burnout, in our

whatever you want to call it, we have been given stories, words, and visions to carry us into God’s promised future.

Out of the depths we cry out to God,
standing in the waters of a well,
the well where Hagar found oasis,
the well where the Samaritan woman received the Messiah,

the well where those who find themselves on the outside receive a grace they did not expect and no one thought they deserved, the well where baptismal waters proclaim “by [God’s] grace all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

Standing in these waters, many people feel a pull to a new way of existing, *of being*, of living in the world. I am hopeful because I see people in this church, clergy and lay leaders alike, who, in the midst of their grief, are catching a new vision of who God is calling us to be. Faithful disciples who don’t know exactly where God might be leading us, but trusting that the Spirit will provide for us. Bold innovators who are willing to give thanks and release the ministries of yesterday, to experiment in their communities, and to trust that God continues to bring light and life into the world.

What if we worried less about the status of our vestments and investments but rather committed ourselves to the well-being of our communities and immersing one another in self-giving love? What if we were freed from the words “the way we’ve always done it” and truly believed the words “**Behold I am doing a new thing**”? What if in the midst of our grief, we took time to name what has been lost, to accept that parts of our lives and our communities have died, and then we eagerly anticipate God’s resurrected life to break forth?

There will be grief. Surely.

But surely there will also be life.

Because Christ is coming. Christ is coming soon.

Mission Offering: Kalaupapa Sunday

On the fourth Sunday of every January, churches are invited to commemorate the estimated 8,000 people diagnosed with Hansen’s Disease who were exiled to Moloka’i’s remote Kalaupapa peninsula.

Resources for observing Kalaupapa Sunday are available on the Hawai’i Conference website (www.hcucc.org).

The suggested date for observing Kalaupapa Sunday is **January 22, 2023**, though churches may honor the patients of Kalaupapa and their families any Sunday in the year.

Henry ‘Ōpūkaha’ia Scholarship

Each year on the third Sunday in February (closest to the anniversary of Henry ‘Ōpūkaha’ia’s death), churches are invited to receive an offering to support scholarships in his name.

Henry ‘Ōpūkaha’ia Scholarships, which honor the legacy of the young Hawaiian credited with inspiring the Sandwich Islands mission that brought Christianity to Hawai’i, are available to candidates for ministry attending an accredited seminary and clergy pursuing continuing education.

Churches are invited to receive an offering to support these scholarships on **Sunday, February 19, 2023**. The offering may also be collected on another date.

Conflict Resolution as Spiritual Practice

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

“Conflict” is an interesting word and our reaction to it depends upon our personal history with dispute and disruption. For example, the parable of the Prodigal Son allows us to see in the older brother how we tend to carry baggage from one conflict to another, stuffing yet more emotional turmoil in the bag at the next point of quarreling. This dynamic of bag-stuffing denotes that the search for a sustainable resolution must speak to the pressing concerns about our own insecurities and our profoundest need for vindication.

The fundamental question which arises during conflict is, “do I have any significance?” This question arises in the younger son of the parable and sets him in conflict with his family and later with his employer. If conflict resolution is to have impact, it must respond in the positive to the underlying questions of significance: Am I noticed? Does my experience count? Is my insight given the same weight as others?

All our insecurities whisper to us that we are too small, too scared, too lacking to carry significance. They become points of “not measuring up” within us. We hide them out of a sense of shame over our own weaknesses. These areas of our lives can become points of self-rejection as we push from our consciousness that which is shameful within us. This disowned part of our personalities is easily projected onto those we are in tension with and may lead to an obsession with eliminating the individual or group who we believe to be the cause of the tension. Instead of reconciliation, we participate in opposition-posturing to bolster a sense of vindication behind which our insecurities huddle as seen in the actions of the older brother upon the return of his prodigal sibling.

Due to this dynamic of shame and vindication, conflict resolution cannot be construed in such a way as to provide an answer that does not partake of unshielded frankness and vulnerable openness by all parties involved. For resolution to be a genuine resolve, it must respond to our suffering and the demands of our personal history.

Sustainable resolution propels us away from the opposition-posturing of the older brother and towards the vulnerability and frankness of the younger brother. Such movement allows shame to give way to the grace of self-acceptance. God’s grace, God’s acceptance of us has the capability to reconcile divisions within us. Yet, as the parable indicates, grace is not singularly focused on self-acceptance. Grace is also communal and provides for reconciliation within the community as well.

is the resolution of our conflicted self and conflicted community. Love, as practiced in the parable, removes our sense of shame by making us worthy of God and each other.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, Jesus discards the shame around which the family is structured by the insertion of love into the family dynamics. The younger son trusts his shame and insecurities to his father, who in turn, postures himself with love and reconciliation toward the younger son. The father did the hard spiritual practice of enlarging his heart. The older son postures himself in opposition, unable to see beyond



PHOTO CREDIT: SHUTTERSTOCK

Herein lies the spiritual practice of conflict resolution. For me to be reconciled with you, you must vouchsafe my vulnerabilities and insecurities. The same is true in reverse, for you to be reconciled with me, I must vouchsafe your vulnerabilities and insecurities. While the prodigal and father were able to vouchsafe each other’s limitations, the prodigal and his older brother were unable to do so.

The parable indicates that love

the shame of the younger brother. The older brother’s own insecurities caused him to question his worth in the outcome of the father’s actions. The older brother remained in the illusion that he was significant only because the younger brother was insignificant. The younger brother, being reconciled to the father, was provided a future, and while his future was informed by his past, he was not trapped by the history of his past.

With Changing Times Comes New Office Space for the Hawai'i Conference

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are pleased to announce that the Hawai'i Conference Foundation ("HCF") will be soon be moving to the Topa Financial Center, located at the bottom of Bishop Street across from the Aloha Tower in downtown Honolulu. This will mark a return of the Conference office to downtown Honolulu approximately 75 years after leaving the Mission Memorial Building in the capitol district in 1947.



New Home for HCUCC and HCF

In 2019, the Hawai'i Conference and the Hawai'i Conference Foundation convened a joint committee to study the use of the Conference's office space at 1848 Nu'uau Avenue (the "**1848 Committee**"). Because of the gradual decline in available funding for Conference programs and corresponding reduction in Conference staff, the building had become larger than is needed for the Conference office. The 1848 Committee reviewed costs relating to carrying the office building and options for subletting or selling the office building, and ultimately in 2020 recommended that the office building be sold.

In 2021, the HCF board approved a plan to sell the office building and HCF engaged the brokerage firm CBRE, Inc. ("**CBRE**"). CBRE, an internationally known real estate

company, was selected following a competitive broker search process. The building was listed, and marketing of the building launched in late 2021. After over 3,600 emails, almost 50,000 web views, and 25 parties undertaking due diligence on the property, HCF accepted an offer from Hawai'i Baptist Academy ("**HBA**") to buy the building. The purchase was closed in September of this year. HBA operates an elementary school across Nu'uau Stream from the 1848 Nu'uau office building and intends to incorporate the building into their neighboring campus. We continue on at the present time in the 1848 Nu'uau office space as tenants of HBA.

Concurrently with efforts to sell the 1848 office building, HCF has been exploring options for relocation to new office space. We have considered opportunities to use underutilized space at several local churches, looked at the possibility of buying a smaller office building, and reviewed options for leasing office space in numerous other locations. Given the current market situation, it appeared that the best option for us presently was to lease office space in the downtown Honolulu office market. Though we will have to pay rent and common area maintenance going forward, the total occupancy costs will be roughly comparable to costs relating to maintaining and renovating our old larger office building, and we will now have sales proceeds that we did not previously

have to invest and grow going forward. We believe that in the long-term, this will help better position HCF to support the Conference financially.

We are excited about our new location in the Topa Financial Center. It is easy to get to; has good vehicle access and parking; a variety of eating, retail, and service establishments in and around the building; a garden deck for work, lunch breaks, and events; high-speed fiber-optic redundant infrastructure; Wi-Fi in the common areas; 24-hour security; on-site air-conditioned storage space; and a variety of other amenities which will be convenient for our staff and visitors. The new space is approximately half the size of our current space and has a good floor plan which has allowed us to design a more efficient space to meet our office needs.

We are now finalizing our interior space plans and expect to be moving into our new space in early April. We look forward to welcoming you all to our new offices soon.



Topa Financial Center



Don't get eaten alive
this holiday season!

May all your holiday wishes & gingerbread dreams come true!

**Merry Christmas from the staff of the Hawai'i
Conference United Church of Christ and the
Hawai'i Conference Foundation**



CHRISTMAS AROUND THE CONFERENCE



An Open Pastoral Letter of Care

The Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers and the Council of Conference Ministers have witnessed

the weariness experienced by our authorized ministers and have come together to offer the following

pastoral letter of care and concern for our colleagues:

“After He had sent the crowds away, He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray; and when it was evening, He was there alone.” -Matthew 14:23

Dear Authorized Ministers and Those Who Care For Them,

In love, we write from our hearts to yours recognizing the great stress and fatigue COVID has created and continues to create for you who are authorized ministers in this Gospel work to which we have all been called. We recognize that all who carry leadership in the life of the church whether ordained or lay have felt the enormous weight and challenge of this ongoing season, as have so many in other areas of life. Still, we are aware that there is a particular burden, often unseen by many, that you who serve in authorized ministry carry because of the inherently relational nature of ministry. We see you, and we hear your weariness and often discouragement. We also love you and hold you in our prayers.

As such we are aware that there is a need to tend to the particular needs of you who serve as our authorized ministers so that your spirits may be renewed and so that the long-term health of God’s mission manifest in the many expressions of the church may be strengthened. The collective care of all our Conferences and indeed the church in every setting compels us to offer a word of encouragement regarding the need for care in ways that give space for rest and rejuvenation; clarity and the renewal of one’s calling.

While we recognize that resources vary widely throughout the settings of our shared life, there are several suggestions we would offer for consideration by local congregations and other settings of ministry.

- First, we urge you to intentionally pray for your leaders and the renewal they may need.
- Second, we encourage you to give permission and blessing for two consecutive weeks away for renewal leave, not counted as vacation time. This time alone will not be enough to process all that has happened or continues to happen in the life of the church but it will offer space for a new ground to be cultivated to engage in ongoing practices of self-care, necessary for sustained and life-giving ministry.
- Third, we encourage you to trust that your setting of ministry will not be diminished by this time away but rather strengthened by it.

Such suggestions as we offer may inevitably give rise to questions like, “Who will lead worship?” or among authorized ministers, “Can I be away?” “Won’t this just be more work in order to take leave?” Because our desire is to diminish stress and not increase it, attached to this letter we are offering resources and suggestions for your use to help minimize the temptation of such questions to resist the renewal time we are urging.

We realize that making arrangements for such time away may require additional encouragement and we stand ready to be present in that regard. We are aware that already many excellent leaders have left the ministry due to the weight of COVID’s impact on ministry alongside the other many stressors at work in the world at this time in history. For this reason, we feel it is especially important to care for the treasure which is you, our authorized leaders. Grief and loss are inherent in this season. Some of us even feel shame, which is a burden that we need not carry. We are hopeful that this time away helps you reconnect deeply with your call and with God, who loves you.

May this commitment we share bear a fruit of renewal for such a time as this.

Blessings and Godspeed,

The Alliance of Associate Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ

The Council of Conference Ministers of the United Church of Christ

Find the resources mentioned above here:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1CKJi5SXR2TcQbEO-Mjw-oKgxgPljd6uiNfOnXI1x7K0/edit>

For this issue, we thought we would share some wisdom and encouragement from those who have been in ministry for many years. These are their responses to the question, "What has made ministry sustainable for you?"

YZ [pronounced "wise"] literature is wisdom from the young, Generations Y and Z to be more specific. See how young people are shining, witnessing, and reflecting light.

1. A culture of shared ministry in the church, which includes the pastor, but is not limited to the pastor. If a ministry is not being fulfilled, the pastor is not expected to step in as the savior or to solve the problem. Instead, a community process of discernment is undertaken to address the issue.



2. A positive active relationship between pastor and moderator, as well as pastor and pastoral relations committee.

3. Adequate attention to spiritual care and growth, which is valued by the church.

—**Phyllis Meighen**, retired ordained minister

I was ordained in June of 1971. I have had the privilege of serving churches in the Northern California Nevada Conference and the Hawai'i Conference. The dynamism of faith as it unfolds in the lives of individuals and within a gathered fellowship has been the sustaining grace of my ministry. The dynamism changes from one community to another and as the years pass. But this truth remains: faith grows, struggles, affirms and flows from the lives of God's people. This is sustaining Grace!



—**Larry Walter**, retired ordained minister

What sustained my years of ministry was

1. Annual Pastors' school—five days with colleagues and International Scholars.

2. Thanksgiving break deer hunting with

family & cousins in northern Wisconsin.

3. Four weeks with young adults and youth doing mission work in Bolivia, South America.

4. Month of vacation starting the Tuesday after Easter on Hawai'i Island.

5. Daily inspirational readings of scripture, Upper Room devotional, Guidepost magazine and the Christian Athlete periodical.

6. Good health (never missed a Sunday because of illness).

7. In each parish we had a Bible study group followed by prayer concerns. I knew these prayer warriors had my back and kept me going.

Mahalo to Ke Akua!

—**Richard Alger**, retired (somewhat) ordained minister

To learn more and see more from youth and young adults, or to submit content for consideration for future pages in *The Friend*, visit our webpage at hcucc.org/yz-literature.

The pure grace of God pumping through the hearts of the congregants. . . And Fig Newtons!

—**Olaf Hoeckmann-Percival**, pastor, Waimea UCC



Great church leaders, encouraging colleagues in ministry, inspiring church folk and a supportive spouse who doubles as my Hebrew language consultant. Also, continually learning, especially about Scripture, theology and current events.

—**Wayne Ibara**, pastor, Makiki Christian Church

News from our Associations and Affiliates

Implications of the Vote at the Specially Called 'Aha Makua

Delegates at the specially called 'Aha Makua meeting on October 1 passed the proposed budget for FYE (Fiscal Year Ending) 2023, which includes \$24,000 for the position of the Papa Makua. Due to the limit on the draw from our endowments and the continuing downward trend of Our Church's Wider Mission giving, no new funds were added to the budget. Rather, a reallocation of available funds was made from the Missional Teams budgets.

The vote established that for FYE2023, the Conference Budget would give \$24,000 to the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches (AHEC) to support the position of the Papa Makua as the Association chooses. It is important to distinguish that this vote did not resolve the question of the position simultaneously being an Associate Conference Minister position, on staff with the Conference Office. Discussions are underway to explore this question with hope that a recommendation will arise out of the dialogue. For FYE2023 the Papa Makua remains a position responsible to the AHEC Board of Directors and not accountable to the Conference Minister or the Conference Council.

The vote also represents a directive for this year only. Future budgets will need to be prepared with available funding as directed by the outcomes of conversations and discussions within the Conference such as the one around accountability and responsibility. There are plans to continue work with the neutral facilitators Peter Adler, Leolinda Iokepa, and Elizabeth Kent to ensure focus remains on short-term commitments as we work toward long-term resolutions.

Letter sent to the churches and authorized ministers on November 22, 2022:

Aloha,

Our Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ has been addressing controversies within the conference, and the Council believes that the challenges they pose are significant. After much consideration and deliberation, we decided that we needed the help of people trained as neutral mediators to assist us.

The Council did a search and is now working with a team of three independent neutral mediation professionals: Elizabeth Kent, Leolinda Iokepa, and Peter Adler. They each have significant experience and specialize in the management and resolution of complex controversies. The team is fully committed to good discussions and productive problem solving. They have experience with different conflict resolution processes, including mediation, meeting facilitation, joint fact-finding, and others.

This fall, Leolinda and Peter facilitated some of the preliminary Papa Mākua budget discussions for us. Now, Elizabeth, Leolinda, and Peter are starting a broader phase of their work. They are making outreach calls to individuals and groups from different parts of the HCUCC 'ohana to better understand the range of issues and challenges we face. They are doing that through small group meetings and individual interviews and are using a mediation process for their initial work.

Once they have completed this phase, which we expect will be in January, they will share their observations and propose some possible next steps at the February Council meeting. We will only pursue the next steps if agreed upon by the Council and funds are available.

Elizabeth, Leolinda, and Peter look forward to being as useful and helpful to the Hawai'i Conference as possible. We ask for your cooperation as we move forward with this endeavor.

Mahalo nui loa,
David K. Popham, Conference Minister

Conference News and Highlights

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

Pastoral Transitions

Sharon MacArthur returned to Community Church of Honolulu to serve as their designated short-term pastor. Her first Sunday was October 2.



Rob Bork was installed as designated pastor of Kapa'a United Church of Christ on Sunday, October 9, by the Kaua'i Association.

Valerie Ross began her ministry as interim pastor with Kaumakapili Church in Honolulu on Sunday, September



11. She continues to serve on the Hawai'i Conference staff as a part-time Associate Conference Minister.

Brandon Durán concluded his ministry as Acting Senior Minister of Central Union Church in Honolulu. His last Sunday was November 20. The Durán family has relocated to San Diego where Brandon will serve as Senior Minister of Kensington Community Church.

Abraham Han was installed as Senior Minister of Mānoa Valley Church in Honolulu on Sunday, November 20 by the O'ahu Association.



Conference Calendar of Events

DECEMBER 23
Christmas Holiday
(Observed; Office Closed)

JANUARY 2, 2023
New Year's Holiday
(Observed; Office Closed)

JANUARY 16
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
(Office Closed)

JANUARY 22
Kalaupapa Sunday

JANUARY 28
State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches

FEBRUARY 4
Conference Council/Board of Directors

FEBRUARY 10 - 11
AHEC Spring 'Aha Halawai

In Memory

James Fung, 75, retired ordained minister, passed away on September 9. Jim served churches in Connecticut, Michigan, and here in Hawai'i, at Kawaiaha'o Church, Lihue Christian

Church, and Kapa'a United Church of Christ. He was also active in the Kaua'i Association, serving as Chairperson for the Committee on Ministry. Jim and his wife, Faith, who preceded him in death, had two children, a son, Ethan, and a daughter, Julia.

Henry Kanoelani Boshard, 94, retired



ordained minister, passed away on November 3. He served most notably at Mokuaikaua Church in Kailua-Kona on Hawai'i Island for 43 years, from 1964 – 2007 and also helped to start Ho'olokahi Church in Kona. Henry served in various capacities in the Hawai'i Island Association and the Conference, including as a General Synod delegate for two terms.

Henry received a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1964 and was ordained in October of that same year. He also received a Doctor of Ministry (D. Min.) from Fuller in 1974. He was preceded in death by his wife, Iris, and one son, Jon. His remaining children include Jo-Anna Boshard, Brian Boshard, and Pamela Noelani Napoleon.

John Hoover, 79, retired ordained minister and founding pastor of



Hokuloa United Church of Christ and Hokuloa's Pastor Emeritus, passed away on November 26 in his home at

Uplands Village, Tennessee. Prior to serving at Hokuloa for 26 years, John was a campus minister at the University of Hawai'i Hilo for 6 years. He was a very active member in the Hawai'i Island Association as he served in various positions. John was also active in the Puako community where he served on the Puako Community Association Board of Directors, the South Kohala Community Development Plan, and the Puako Historical Society.

December 2022

KA PAPA HO'OLĀLĀ

Fatigue as a Spiritual Opportunity

PHYLLIS MEIGHEN, RETIRED ORDAINED MINISTER; JONATHAN ROACH, ASSOCIATE CONFERENCE MINISTER

Have you ever woken from a great night's sleep and wanted to go back to bed? If so, that is fatigue. Fatigue is not being physically tired out after a long day; rather, fatigue is a spiritual/emotional state that drains us of our energy. Fatigue can make the most dedicated person give up. It can show up as burnout, compassion fatigue, emotional exhaustion, or as a spiritual desert.

Our cover image of a kukui nut oil lamp reminds us of the parable of the maidens in Matthew 25. In that story, Jesus compares five smart maidens

who took extra oil for their lamps as they waited for the wedding party to the five foolish maidens whose lamps burned out while they were waiting.

Fatigue is a spiritual opportunity that reminds us that God doesn't show up until we are depleted and ready to depend on God. If we live in fear of burning out, we cut back until we are barely burning and even then, we will burn out because we see our fuel as a finite resource. But if we lean into our trust in God, we learn that our fuel is a renewable resource. Our lamps can be



refilled again and again. If we allow God to keep filling us up, we can burn as bright and as long as needed.

It is our responsibility to figure out what activities will empower us to open ourselves to God who can refill us again and again. Let us burn bright this Christmas season as we reflect the spiritual energy of the baby of Bethlehem.

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 \$15 will pay for one person's subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, 1848 Nu'uuanu Avenue, Honolulu, HI, 96817.