

HAWAII CONFERENCE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



# The Friend

The Oldest Newspaper West Of The Rocky Mountains | Founded 1843 | Volume 40, Issue 2 | May 2024



# HO'ĀLA HOU

*God is making all things new*

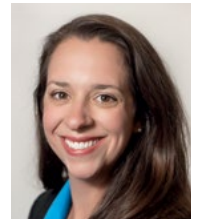
Photo: Hawai'i Island, Kalani Wong

ONE 'OHANA

UNIFIED • RADIANT • TRANSFORMING

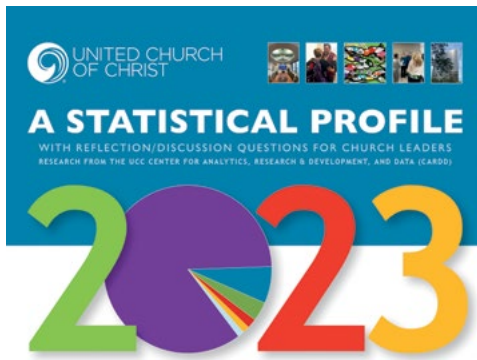
# Emerging Data Trends in the UCC

ERICA DOLLHOPF, PH.D., DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR ANALYTICS, RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT, AND DATA (CARDD), UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST NATIONAL SETTING



## Introduction

As I reflect on the 2023 Statistical Profile trends that are especially relevant to the UCC's future, the emergence of virtual worship and increase in the number of small churches immediately stood out as being significant. This article will discuss the overarching data trends in the UCC for both topics and offer thoughts on why these trends may be sources of hope for the future of the church.



## Virtual Worship

One of the biggest recent changes in church life is the widespread adoption of online worship. Prior to the pandemic, only about 9% of UCC congregations reported offering virtual worship; in 2024, this figure was at 78.3%. Moreover, virtual worship is becoming a permanent feature of the church landscape: among churches offering virtual worship, 98.0% said that they planned to continue offering this option in the future. Typically, changes in church life unfold over decades; virtual worship is an unusual instance where major changes occurred within months. While virtual worship was initially a common way to continue worshipping through difficult pandemic conditions, virtual worship has persisted

as a way to include more people in worship. Beyond just being an option for current members, virtual worship has also been a way for members' family and friends (87.0% of churches), former members (71.0%), and even family, friends, and colleagues of the pastor (65.5%) to be involved with worship. In addition, virtual worship may be increasing the ways our congregations are attracting new members – 51.2% of congregations reported people interested in becoming members were attending virtually. While the full impact virtual worship is still unfolding, this trend will continue to shape our congregations into the future and may open opportunities for churches to consider what membership and engagement looks like when church participants include those who live hundreds or thousands of miles away.

## Small but Vital Congregations


Another major emerging trend is that the UCC is increasingly a church of small churches. In 2022, 26% of UCC members belonged to congregations with 50 or fewer members compared to 19% in 2012. Looking at in-person worship attendance over the past couple decades, the pattern is even more pronounced – 68% of UCC churches had 50 or fewer people on average in weekly worship attendance in 2022, with only 28% of churches reporting the same in 1995. While more UCC churches are small churches than ever before, many of these churches exhibit vitality and are drawing on the strengths of being a small church. For instance, the smallest churches have the highest rate of worship attendance numbers compared to membership – 75% in churches with

1-50 members but under 50% in all larger size categories. While not all those in weekly worship are members, this statistic suggests that generally the smallest congregations have the most engaged membership. This is reinforced when looking at volunteerism in churches – churches with 1-50 members have the highest ratios of church members volunteering at the church or in the community compared to the church's membership (see graphic). The CARDD office is continuing to conduct research to understand small church vitality so that we can better support our growing numbers of small churches.

## Conclusion

While the UCC of the future will look different from the UCC of the past, emerging trends – including the expansion of virtual worship and the vitality of small churches—suggest that there are reasons to be hopeful in this future. Just as virtual worship enables churches to expand

... continued on page 8



**God is still speaking**

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## UCC Judd Street- “To Infinity & Beyond”

DARREN T. GALINDO, SENIOR PASTOR, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST JUDD STREET



UCC Judd Street has been using the services of Worship Design Studios for our livestreaming worship. One worship series used a *Toy Story* movie catch phrase, “To infinity & beyond.” That has been our mindset. We needed to go beyond what we had done before. Using digital media images has made it easier to produce our online worship presentations, and it has encouraged us to create anchor images for in-person worship.



During the pandemic, we saw an opportunity to move toward livestreaming, which we had already been talking about for some time. God has been helping us along the way. Mark 10:27, “for with God all things are possible.” A large donation from one of our members helped us to get started in buying the livestreaming equipment and large monitors for the sanctuary. Soon after we returned to in-person worship, we were up and livestreaming with the help of trained volunteers.

It did not take long to get 65% of our people back into live worship after the pandemic, and producing worship videos for YouTube and Facebook during the pandemic helped us to build our online congregation. Now in 2024, our in-person worship attendees are moving into the 80+ range and online worshippers

are at 105 each week. Prior to COVID, we averaged 110 attendees with our one in-person worship service, but now with the help of livestreaming, we are now reaching a combined total of 185 worshippers per week.

In addition to livestreaming, we have added two new ministry teams, pickleball as well as a sewing and crafts group, to go along with our ‘ukulele classes. A majority of the group members are from the community. We also restarted TED Talks for adult faith formation and added a chair tai chi group for fragile seniors and newly retired baby boomers.

We have since built a multi-sports court for pickleball and preschool activities and are looking into starting small group ministries. “For with God all things are possible.” Amen to that!

## Emerging at Hokuloa

GWENDOLYN NANI HILL, TRANSITIONAL PASTOR, HOKULOA UCC



Nearly two years ago, in the September 2022 issue of *The Friend*, I penned an article titled “Preaching the Aloha Spirit Roundtable.” This roundtable epitomizes a community of diversity, intricately woven with lavish hospitality and inclusivity. Its expansive sphere symbolizes abundance, richness, and breadth, ever dynamic as it extends outward across its vast expanse. At its core lies the body of Christ, reliant on the central host, Jesus Christ, embodying the “Aloha Spirit.”

Now, two years later, these images of Jesus Christ resound through the voices of the faithful, open and affirming community, both present here and across the vastness of the roundtable, facilitated by the remarkable technology of Zoom. The

synergy of the message at the table’s center emphasized the indispensable grace and extravagant love of God in Jesus Christ.



This message was complemented by liturgy, prayers, and exceptional contemporary music, described as “breathtaking, gratifying, pretentious, authentic.” The communion table embodied visible signs of

God’s invisible grace, fostering “ho’oponopono – repair, healing, and reconciliation of our brokenness. The Passover Seder/communion meal expanded the paradigm of inclusivity beyond our own doors, proving engaging and powerful.”

Rich conversations stemming from Bible and book studies, along with the monthly “church picnic” on Zoom, strengthened relationships across the miles. The community’s trajectory shifted outward from mere maintenance to active mission. Alongside ongoing efforts such as the Food Bank, Care Portal, Salvation Army Red Kettle campaign, there was a coordinated effort to assist

... continued on page 10

## Innovation and Relevance

DAVID K. POPHAM, CONFERENCE MINISTER

Phiwa Langeni, Ambassador for Innovation and Engagement for the UCC Center for Analytics, Research and Development, and Data, shares that “churches do not close because they run out of resources or people. Churches close because they run out of relevance.” Langeni reminds us that when we speak of “successful” churches, we are speaking of those churches that engage with their wider community, sustaining the significance of the church in personal lives—in short, relevance.



Makawao Union Church Secondhand Heaven Ministry

The history of Christianity is full of the stories of how the church was relevant in different ways across differing eras. At one time the wider community needed hospitals and the church provided medical care as best it understood it. At one time the wider community needed education for its children who worked in the mines and factories of the industrial revolution Monday through Saturday. The church provided school on Sunday with a mixture of core subjects and religious training.

Innovation is a part of the life of the church stretching back to Jesus. Each miracle of Jesus exemplifies a moment of innovation. When Jesus was presented with a new need, he assessed the need, and then

with intention addressed it while enhancing relational ties. Most of our churches assess needs on a regular basis but find it hard to be intentional about addressing the need. It is this inability to intentionally address needs in the wider community that makes us irrelevant to what is going on.

Through this understanding of relevancy, we realize that innovation is about providing something that is useful. Often the useful comes through small, steady steps. Jesus didn't open a wine venture for the

wine aficionados of Cana. He turned the jugs of water at hand into wine for one wedding. Mother Theresa of Calcutta did not start with a care facility, she offered a single person help. While it is uncomfortable for us to navigate that which is not clearly structured, we do have the ability to navigate what we see and know is at hand.

We know that our society is aging. This tells us that while we can and should honor faith formation and support among our children and youth, we should also have a hearty faith formation and support program for the kupuna in our congregations. It is time we celebrate our aging instead of being embarrassed by it.

We know that family structure

has changed and continues to shift. Those remaining single make up a significant portion of the population. It

is time for our churches to embrace the single and to refrain from seeing them as the “spares” among the couples at church. It also tells us that our Sunday school programs will not be populated by births among church members. We should be rethinking what faith formation among younger adults looks like as well as when and where it should take place.

We know that the younger generations, Millennials, Gen Z, and the Alpha Generation have fewer ties to traditional religious and political institutions and rely more on social media to build personal networks. This certainly is a sign that if your church has no presence on the Internet, it has declared itself irrelevant to the younger generations. Such presence may vary from websites to social media to online worship and Bible study. Still, without it the younger generations will by and large be unaware of your church, even if it is set at the corner of the street on which they live.

Relevancy is the measure of our churches' cultural competence. Do we possess the skill and ability to significantly engage the life of the people in our wider communities? We know we did at one time, as our history is full of stories of the “good old days.” People change, attitudes shift, and what once worked well no longer applies. Do we continue to do the same-old-same-old in hopes of recapturing a bygone era? Or can we innovate and be relevant to the lives of those around us?



# Help! What's Next?

## First Steps in Developing Property for New Mission (Part 2)

ANDREW BUNN, HCF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In our last issue of *The Friend*, we addressed a process to help church leadership recognize the need for change. Once your church has gone through that process, it should investigate the potential of the property itself.

### What should be considered?

There are a variety of factors that a church should consider, starting with understanding the short- and long-term needs of the church, including space requirements, functionality, and any specific goals or objectives of the church and the surrounding community. Study the potential for renovating existing buildings or constructing new buildings on the site, including the number of structures, the size and fit, adaptability for future uses, access, parking, and preservation of open space or historic features. Evaluate the local real estate market and evaluate potential opportunities and the feasibility of preliminary design plans. Conduct a financial analysis to assess the costs and potential returns associated with different development options.

Consider environmental concerns raised by the manner and impact of development, and possibly historic and archaeological preservation issues. Review land use and zoning regulations and title documents that may restrict or shape development plans. Analyze the potential risk of the development plan along with strategies to mitigate identified risks. It is not a small or easy task.

### Who can help with this process?

Your church will need professional help to complete the redevelopment plan and help navigate the development process. **Architects and design professionals** help to create a vision for the property and prepare plans that align with your church's objectives. **Real estate consultants** or brokers provide insights into market trends, property valuation, and sales and leasing opportunities and help with marketing aspects. **Urban planners** assist in navigating zoning regulations, land use planning, and obtaining necessary entitlements from local authorities. **Surveyors and engineers** may be needed to assess the physical characteristics of the property, including topography, drainage, and infrastructure requirements. **Public relations professionals** or community organizers facilitate effective communication with the local community, including gathering input, addressing concerns, and fostering positive community relationships. **Environmental**

### consultants

help to assess current environmental conditions and potential environmental impacts of the project. **Financial advisors** study the financial viability of the project, including cost estimates, revenue projections, and return on investment. **Lawyers** with real estate and transactional experience help navigate the maze of legal issues, assist the church with contract negotiations and drafting, and protect and advocate for the interest of the church at each stage of the process. **Contractors** can provide costs for construction and eventually construct the improvements on the property. A **project manager** will oversee the entire development process, including helping your church select a developer and contractor and keeping the project on track and within budget.

Many of these areas of services overlap and might be provided by one or a small group of professional firms or development companies. It's important these professionals collaborate to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach to project development and that all aspects are clearly explained to the church. By assembling a team of professionals with expertise in different aspects of the project needs, your church can navigate the complexities of the process and make well-informed decisions at each step of the way.

There is much to consider so please do not hesitate to reach out to your Conference and Foundation staff for guidance.



EASTER CELEBRATIONS AROUND THE CONFERENCE



Church of the Crossroads, Honolulu



United Church of Christ Judd Street, Honolulu



Lānai Union Church



First United Protestant Church, Hilo



Kosrae Hilo Women's Christian Association, First United Protestant Church



Haili Congregational Church, Hilo



Hilo Coast UCC, Honomu





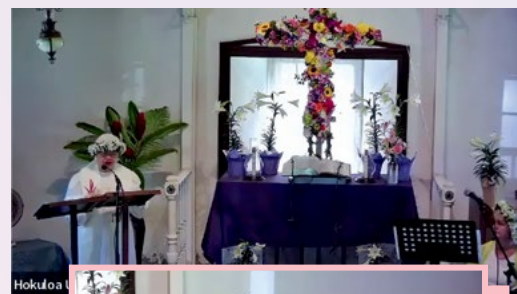
Lihue Christian Church



Kaumakapili Church, Honolulu, Palm Sunday

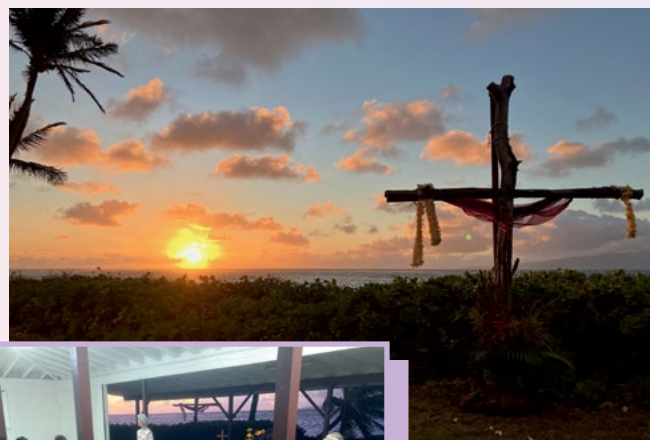


Paia Hawaiian Protestant Church



Hokuloa UCC, Puako

Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church



Waialua Congregational Church, Moloka'i



# Karen Georgia Thompson, James Foucher Jr. to Keynote 202nd 'Aha Pae'āina

The 202nd 'Aha Pae'āina, the annual gathering of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ, will be held in person for the first time since 2019 on June 13 – 15, 2024 at Central Union Church on O'ahu. This year's theme is "Ho'āla Hou," "To make new, renew." The guiding scripture is Isaiah 43:18-19.

Attendees will be in for a real treat, as the 'Aha will feature:

- United Church of Christ (UCC) General Minister and President



Karen Georgia Thompson, who will be with us and will be the keynote speaker at the opening worship on Thursday, June 13. There will also be a special time set aside for her to meet and speak with our youth delegates and participants in the youth program.

- UCC Generosity Officer for the Western Region James Foucher Jr., who will be the theological reflector and will share his thoughts on our time together during the closing worship service.
- An 'Aha Pae'āina Youth Event where youth can find a sacred space that embraces and celebrates the diverse faith and witness of our young people!
- An opportunity to participate



Karen Georgia Thompson



James Foucher Jr.

- in a service project assembling menstrual hygiene kits to address the injustice of period poverty.
- Our churches on O'ahu, who will treat folks to a Taste of O'ahu, which is sure to be a tasty time of fellowship and good food!
- Our new initiative, HCUCC CARES
- Our annual business session
- Display tables, workshops, Café Conversations, and much more!

... Emerging Data Trends in the UCC, continued from page 2

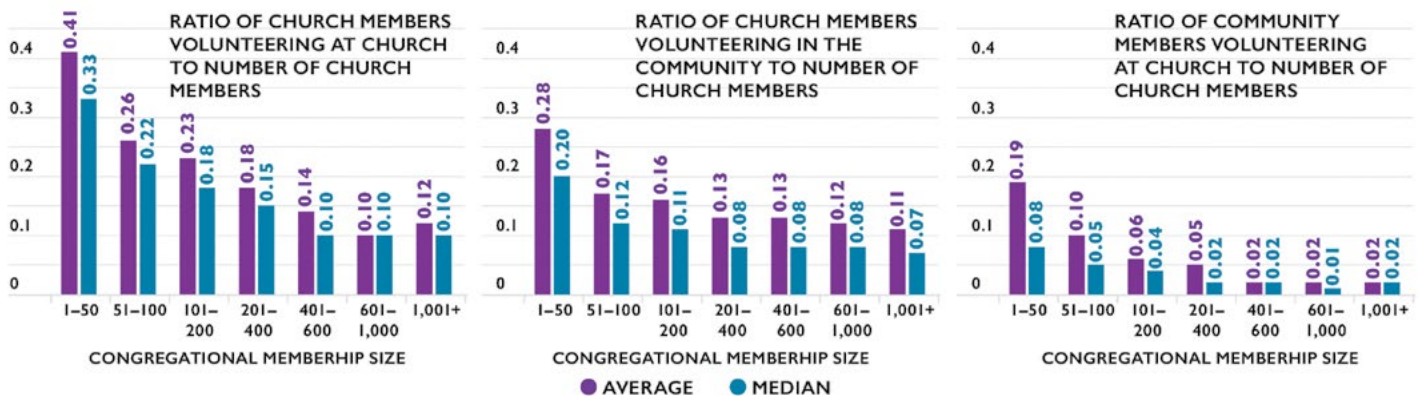
worship access in ways not previously envisioned, the expansion in small churches indicates that our members may be increasingly part of close-knit, highly engaged church communities. I hope that these statistics will help you see where your church fits within

the UCC's wider trends and perhaps generate ideas for future visions of your congregation.

*All data referenced is from the 2023 UCC Statistical Profile, except the virtual worship data, which is from*

*the 2024 Yearbook & Directory and will be featured in the 2024 UCC Statistical Profile. For more information, please download a free copy of the 2023 UCC Statistical Profile at: [2023statisticalreport.v11webUPDATED.pdf \(ucc.org\)](#).*

## VOLUNTEERS BY MEMBERSHIP SIZE



Graphic from the 2023 UCC Statistical Profile



# Sponsor a Youth at the 'Aha Pae'āina

The 'Aha Pae'āina Youth Event Planning Team invites all churches and members of the Hawai'i Conference to Sponsor A Youth! Whether or not your church will be sending youth to the 'Aha, it is our collective work to welcome and invest in our young people. For \$125 you can sponsor one youth's full participation in the 'Aha Youth Event. Let's work together to make




the Youth Event accessible to every family in our Conference.

Read more about sponsoring a youth on the Conference website: <https://www.hcucc.org/single-post/sponsor-a-youth-2024>.


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.


## Meet the 'Aha Pae'āina Youth Event 2024 Planning Team:

  
 "I love that God has a great sense of humor and that when youth get together, there are lots of laughs! I can't wait to meet the youth of our conference as we laugh, learn and find new ways to love the world God still loves!"  
 Lauren Buck Medeiros

  
 "This is going to be a fun and exciting adventure for all youth involved. A time to create new friendships, learn more about yourself and God, lots of fun and many laughs. These youth events were lots of fun when I was a youth!!!"  
 Tiffany Marrotte, Kōloa Union Church

once again. The planning committee holds the vision that the gathering shall a time for worship, inspiration, and fellowship."


  
 "I pray that this program will help form new connections with our younger members across Hawai'i, encourage them to see themselves as beloved children of God, and help them be the change they want to be."  
 Malia Galindo, Church of the Crossroads


  
 "It's such an amazing blessing and full circle moment reminiscing about when I attended my first Hawai'i UCC youth camp with other UCC interisland church youth 17 years ago. It feels good to be able to give back to the youth... Looking forward to reconnecting and growing in our faith journey alongside the youth ohana."  
 Nate Timoteo, Bethel of Amazing Grace Church


  
 "Attending wider church events as a youth helped me to feel more connected to our sister churches and Conference as a whole. I have fond memories of youth events and am excited for our youth to have the opportunity to create new and positive experiences in the church."  
 Kristen Young, United Church of Christ Judd Street

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](https://www.hcucc.org/yz-literature).

  
 "The excitement of the this year's 'Aha Pae'āina is the blessing of gathering in person"  
 Danielle White, Hilo Coast UCC

  
 Irene Hassan, Kailua Christian Church

  
 Mary Herbig, Central Union Church

  
 Ben Sheets, Lāna'i Union Church

(Not pictured: Joan Sakaba, Lori Yamashiro)

## News from our Associations and Affiliates

### Let's Work Together to End Period Poverty

The Hawai'i Conference, in partnership with Ma'i Movement Hawai'i, is coordinating a service project to create menstrual hygiene kits to address the injustice of period poverty, and we hope you will join us! From now until the 'Aha

Pae'āina in June, we invite you to collect needed period products and bring them to the 'Aha Pae'āina at Central Union Church. During the 'Aha we will assemble the kits for Ma'i Movement Hawai'i, who will

distribute them to those in need on all Hawaiian islands. We hope to be able to assemble at least 100 kits.

If you are coming from an island other than O'ahu, or even if you are unable to attend this year, we encourage you to consider a monetary donation, of which 100% will be used to purchase the supplies for the kits. More information may be found on the Conference website at [hcucc.org](http://hcucc.org).

If you and/or your church prefer to assemble the hygiene kits yourselves and then bring them to the 'Aha Pae'āina, here's what goes into a kit:

- ❖ 1 resealable zipper plastic bag (gallon size or 9" x 12")

- ❖ 12 Day or Regular pads
  - ❖ 5 Night pads
  - ❖ 5 Tampons
  - ❖ 5 individually wrapped pantyliners
  - ❖ 5 individually wrapped feminine wipes
- Check out Ma'i Movement Hawai'i's Amazon order wishlist (<https://bit.ly/ordermai>) to purchase products online.

Please note that unscented period products are requested.

A special Ma'i Care Kit label will be provided at the 'Aha to be affixed to the front of each bag.

If you are assembling your own kits, you are encouraged to add a personal note or sticker. Please do **NOT** add food or medicine of any kind.

Menstrual hygiene items are **not** covered by U.S. government assistance programs or by the Red Cross assisting victims of natural disasters.

Let's work together to end period poverty!



... Emerging at Hokuoia, continued from page 3

several homeless individuals and a family of eight. A growing mindfulness of environmental ministry through kuleana (stewardship) of the 'āina (sacred land), was highlighted by guest speakers in our Talk Story series. They shared insights into the Native Hawaiian history and culture along The Ala Kahakai Trail. This trail passes by Hokuoia Church and nearly encircles the island. The trail includes a beautiful space by the bay within Hokuoia's grounds,

offering potential for a Peace Park. Evening concerts in our courtyard were presented by four sections of the orchestra of the Kamuela Philharmonic Symphony made possible by our music director. These concerts provided post-COVID healing from loneliness, uniting the greater community through music and camaraderie.

The community's outreach stretched to the margins of the roundtable with extravagant hospitality extended to our brothers and sisters from

Chuukese and Marshallese churches, as well as Alcoholics Anonymous groups. Three-day fun-filled VBS sessions were held with the Waikoloa Chuukese Fellowship, alongside a celebration of PAAM Sunday with the Waikoloa Marshallese Church.

Acknowledging the inevitable "ebbs and flows" in the life of a church and embracing our imperfections, we strive to be a faithful "cadre of lay leaders who keep the fires burning" for Ke Akua.

# Conference News and Highlights

Go to [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

## Local Church News

**Hilo Coast United Church of Christ** on Hawai'i Island celebrated 130 years of mission on March 23 – 24!



**Haili Congregational Church** on Hawai'i Island will celebrate their 200th anniversary on May 19!



## Pastoral Transitions

### Heather Barfield

was installed as pastor and teacher of Kaumakapili Church by the O'ahu Association on March 10.



### Sam Masilamoney



has been called to serve as designated term pastor of First United Protestant Church in Hilo. His first Sunday was April 7.

### A. Rushan Sinnaduray was

installed as Senior Minister of Central Union Church by the O'ahu Association on April 14.



## Conference Calendar of Events

### MAY 18

O'ahu Spring Mokupuni

### MAY 27

Memorial Day  
(Office Closed)

### JUNE 11

Kamehameha Day  
(Office Closed on June 18)

### JUNE 13 - 15

202nd 'Aha Pae'aina

### JUNE 17

Office Closed

### JUNE 19

Juneteenth Holiday  
(Office Closed)

### JULY 4

Independence Day  
(Office Closed)



## In Memory

**Aletha Kaohi**, 93, long-time member of Hanapepe Hawaiian

Congregational Church and staunch supporter of the Hawai'i Conference and Foundation and the State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches, died in her home in Waimea, Kaua'i, on April 9.

Aunty Aletha was deeply respected in the wider community and was just a wealth of knowledge about the 'aina, the people and the Conference. Without her, we wouldn't have the book *Celebrating Advocacy: Past, Present, and Future*

and the history it provides.

Aunty represented the Conference for many years on the G.N. Wilcox and Elsie Wilcox distribution boards. And because of that, the Conference was the recipient of many large grants from those foundations. She always advocated for the Conference and Foundation, and she wouldn't hesitate to say if she thought we were going in the wrong direction...actually, she had no problem telling anybody if she thought they weren't behaving well or being "pono."

The Conference and Foundation were truly blessed to have had her support and she will be deeply missed.

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, 700 Bishop Street, Suite 825, Honolulu, HI, 96813.

May 2024

HO'ĀLA HOU

## HCUCC CARES!

**Who is the Hawai'i Conference  
United Church of Christ?**

WE, each one of us, are a vital part  
of the Hawai'i Conference!

**What does the Hawai'i  
Conference do?**

HCUCC CARES! Together, we:

- **Connect**
- **Advocate**
- **Resource**
- **Embrace**
- **Serve**

HAWAI'I CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

# HCUCC



**CONNECT ADVOCATE RESOURCE EMBRACE SERVE**

Throughout the month of May, we  
will be exploring what each of the letters  
in CARES represents and how all of

us together in the Hawai'i Conference  
have an active role to play in living  
into the mission of the Conference

and making our vision a reality.  
Help us spread the news that  
HCUCC CARES!