

## Tuvaluan Church Is First in UCC

The first Tuvaluan congregation in United Church of Christ history was formally received into the O'ahu Association of the Hawai'i Conference on Sunday, August 9.



Established in 1995, Tuvalu Fou Congregational Christian Church, which currently worships at Dole Community Park in Honolulu, was established in 1995 and began exploring UCC membership in 2012.

"This is a very important day for everyone," said Pastor Iosefa Kilisome. "Our community is so small and we cannot do this on our own. We've been asking God to help us, and the United Church of Christ is the answer He gave."

The church's eighty members come from Tuvalu, whose nine islands and numerous islets lie midway between Hawai'i and Australia and northwest of Samoa. With a total land area of ten square miles, it is the fourth smallest independent nation in the world.

Many of the nation's 11,000 citizens are gradually being forced to migrate to other places because of rising sea levels caused

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## Welcoming Veterans into Congregations

"War is the gateway to hell, and coming home is hell."

This reality for thousands of veterans returning from war was expressed by Stephen Boyd, UCC Minister for Chaplains and Ministers in Specialized Settings, who was in Hawai'i recently to lead a workshop on moral injury.

Moral injury, he explained, is the psychological and spiritual trauma triggered by transgressing deeply held moral values. When soldiers participate in killing or other acts that betray their conscience, feelings of guilt and shame ensue, often leading to destructive behavior including alcohol abuse, self-isolation and suicide. One result is that on average twenty-two U.S. veterans take their own lives every day.

"The war is fought when you come home," said a veteran of the Iraq War in *High Ground*, a documentary shown during the September 12 workshop at Windward United Church of Christ. "You see people being alive and ask yourself, 'Why don't I feel that?'"

Stephen said veterans rarely re-integrate into society successfully. Many volunteer for multiple deployments to avoid facing demons that haunt their post-war conscience. While the Defense Department



and Department of Veterans Affairs have developed drugs and therapies to treat post-traumatic stress disorder, almost nothing is in place to treat moral wounds. This is where churches have a unique and powerful contribution to make.

By welcoming veterans back into our congregations and hearts, Stephen said, we can help bring them home—truly home—and begin to unpack the invisible wounds they bear. A guide for launching veterans' ministries is *Coming Home: Ministry That Matters with Veterans and Military Families*, a book written by military chaplain Zachary Moon.

"I wish this book had been available when I served as a pastor," said Stephen. "I would have given a copy to everybody in my congregation." It offers insight into the elements of military culture, the human experience of combat, Christian beliefs about war, and options for taking action through responsive ministry. Discussion questions, supplemented by theological reflections and recommended readings, make this a helpful resource for personal use, Bible study or workshops.

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## The Welcome Is Home

By Charles Buck, Conference Minister

It was a simple question. And being me, I offered no simple answer.

Recently, at the end of a long day of meetings in South Korea (to explore a possible Conference mission partnership), I was asked, “Do you feel like you’ve come home?” Since I’m Korean with family from Korea, I could have simply answered, yes. Instead, I paused a bit and said, “I’m not sure. Ten or fifteen years ago, I felt a sense of coming home. But now it’s different.”



The next morning, I went back to my inquirer and told her, “Your question got me thinking all night,” which was true. “Now I have a better answer,” which was not quite true because I was still thinking on it but felt she deserved more than my earlier vague response.

I explained to her that in the past I always had family to visit and the family house to stay in. But all have since moved on to different places and the house has been sold. That sense of home—of a familiar people and a familiar place—is no longer there. Korea may still be home, but it’s changed for me.

Thinking more about home—what it is and where it’s found—made me realize that it is indeed a changing reality. The comforting notion of a home to come back to, where things are familiar, simple and predictable, is illusory, or at least temporary. My mother, who has Alzheimer’s, lives in Phoenix, Arizona, and occasionally expresses her wish (stated as a demand) to return home to Oakland, California. But because she needs constant care and attention, home must now be a shared room on a secure floor of a large retirement community in a strange city to which her only tie are her daughters who live there. She will never go back home to Oakland.

Changing home is hardly ever by choice. Alzheimer’s compelled Mom to leave home, and not for the first time. She did it throughout her life, including as a young girl in Korea under Japanese occupation and during the Korean war; then as a young adult in America fleeing ruins and dictatorship; and as a fresh retiree building a new home after the old burned down in a fire.

Being forced from home is the experience for all migrants, immigrants and refugees, such as those we’ve witnessed recently escaping war and terrorism in Syria and other parts of the Middle East. Armed conflict, political unrest, religious persecution and economic uncertainty are all reasons that people flee home in search of a new one. And such is the case through all of history: either ourselves or our ancestors

have migration stories to share, tales to tell of finding home. “A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien...” (Deuteronomy 26:5).

So it’s been said that home is a matter of mind, or home is where the heart is, or even that the journey itself is home. But these suggest that home is transitory, even somewhat elusive. In reflecting on the scriptures, I believe that home, though ever changing, is still a concrete reality. In fact, home is found where there is welcome.

For example, Jacob was constantly on the move, never at home, once he stole his father’s blessing from his older twin, Esau. Although he received God’s assurance in a dream that home would someday be Bethel, he fled from one situation to another for over twenty years. Only when he worked up the courage to face Esau’s anger and receive, instead, his embrace was Jacob able finally to stop running. Though he settled in Shechem, then later and finally in Bethel, home was never so much the place he settled, but the welcome he received (Genesis 27-35).

When Jesus told a scribe that the “Son of the Human One has nowhere to lay his head” (Matthew 8:20), he was warning his followers that they will not always find a ready welcome, that they should expect prejudice against stranger or foreigner. That was the norm then, as his disciples found out (Luke 9:5), and it is certainly the case to this day with our own anti-immigrant sentiments and xenophobic attitudes and practices.

So it is illuminating that when things were most disruptive for Jesus, in the time of his passion and death, when things were most unsettling and unsettled, Jesus practiced the ministry of welcoming. Through gracious acts of washing his disciples’ feet (John 13:1-20), promising a prisoner on the cross a place in Paradise (Luke 23:43), and bringing together as family his mother and the “beloved disciple” (John 19:27), he created home for others and for himself.

In these days of turmoil, as unprecedented numbers are forced to flee home because of conflict, the stories of scripture and the acts of Jesus remind us that we are inclined to respond with indifference or intolerance, as people have since the beginning of time. But if we can recall our own experiences of migration, hear the stories of the other, and embrace the universal yearning for home, we will recognize that welcome is the response of God’s people. In so doing, we create a deep sense of home no matter how much the world changes around us.



God is still speaking

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**Phone:** (808) 537-9516 or (800) 734-7610 (Neighbor Island Toll Free)

**Fax:** (808) 521-7196

**E-mail:** [leehenrychang@hcucc.org](mailto:leehenrychang@hcucc.org) Lee Henry-Chang

**Contributing Writers:** Scott Davis, Kuulei Funn, Donald Schmidt

## Hawai'i Members Visit Korea, Move Partnership Forward

Hawai'i Conference members spent a busy week in Korea recently to discuss peace, celebrate a centennial, observe a migrant ministry, attend a large urban church, witness the ecological devastation by a dam, and visit a school whose proud mascot is a rooster.

Iese Tuuao (Nanakuli Samoan), Joanne Nakashima (Hanapepe UCC), Joan Sakaba (Kailua Christian) and Charles Buck (Conference Minister) traveled to South Korea in September at the invitation of the South Seoul Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).

Earlier this year, members of the Presbytery came to Hawai'i to explore mission partnership with Hawai'i. The Hawai'i group paid a return visit to learn about the Presbytery and the PROK, and to take next steps toward partnership.



*Global Sarang Mission, a PROK ministry in Seoul, offers free dental services to foreign workers from many countries*

The Hawai'i group, joined by UCC staff Karen Georgia Thompson, Ecumenical Officer, and Derek Duncan, Associate for Global Advocacy, began the visit to Korea with an ecumenical forum on peace in Northeast Asia.

The PROK and the Presbyterian Church in Korea co-hosted this gathering of their Reformed Church partners (including the UCC). Presenting papers, Bible studies and sermons were scholars, ministers, laypersons and students seeking to understand the geopolitical dynamics among China, Japan, and North and South Korea, and the impact these have around the world. At the conclusion of the forum, the entire group traveled to Odusan Observatory which lies just two hundred meters from the border of North Korea at its closest point.

The UCC members and Reformed Church delegates, more than sixty from around the world, attended the PROK's General Assembly to help celebrate its one hundredth anniversary. Delegates also learned about the PROK's social justice ministries, including its campaign against a large dam that will inundate a small Korean town, flood nearby farm fields, and kill natural habitat along the river's once-flowing path.

On Sunday, Hawai'i delegates visited Karibong Church, a mega-church in Seoul founded by laborers in an area now heavily populated by foreign migrant workers. They also visited the nearby Global Sarang (Love) Mission, a PROK church and ministry which offers religious and social services—including

meals, shelter, language classes and worship, health and dental care, and immigration and legal advice—to workers from China, Mongolia, Philippines, Myanmar, and other countries.



*Iese Tuuao and Lorenzo Dos Santos, General Secretary of the East Timor Protestant Church, stand above what is left of the Naesong River, whose flow has been cut by a large dam project.*

The Korean hosts gave a tour of the two campuses of Hanshin University, a PROK school, and met with its president, Sooil Chai, who is also a PROK minister. President Chai presented the group a plaque with the school's mascot, a rooster, explaining that the rooster has important meaning in Korean and European cultures, as well as in the Bible. The cry of the rooster that Peter heard after he denied Jesus three times is a "wake-up call at the dawn of history seeking the revitalization of life."

The visit concluded with strong affirmation from both sides that the Presbytery and the Conference formally establish the mission partnership.

*(Tuvalu Church, continued from page 1)*

by global warming. Iosefa said that two hundred Tuvaluans now live in Hawai'i, and his church congregation represents about forty percent of the state's Tuvaluan population.



*Sunday School is held each week during Tuvalu Fou's worship service.*

"Excitement abounds across the UCC over Tuvalu Fou entering into covenant with the denomination," said Hawai'i Conference Minister Charles Buck, who represented the UCC at the August 9 reception service along with O'ahu

Association President John Stepulis and Conference staff Kenneth Makuakane.

"At the same time, their presence among us reminds us that we must address the important issues of global warming, which threatens to swallow up a number of Pacific Island nations and change their cultures permanently. We look forward to what God has in store as we covenant together," said Charles.

Another service of reception for the church will be held as part of the O'ahu Association 'Aha Moku-puni on October 10.

## Church Administrators Gathering

On August 26, twenty-five church office support staff, secretaries, and administrators from O'ahu, Maui, Kaua'i and Hawai'i Island came together for the Church Administrators Gathering at the Conference Office. They spent time with Conference Staff, learned about the UCC and Hawai'i Conference and the resources available to them, and met and shared stories with each other.



## New Clergy Gathering

Eleven clergy new to ministry in the Hawai'i Conference were invited to the Conference Office on August 20. They learned about resources available to them and shared stories of their experiences adjusting to life and ministry in Hawai'i.

## Hualoha Congregational Church Service of Rededication

A Service of Rededication was held at Hualoha Congregational Church on Maui. Na Kahu William Kaina and Kealahou Alika presided over the services at the rebuilt and remodeled chapel.



## Hawai'i Conference Represented in Korea

A four-person delegation from the Hawai'i Conference recently returned from attending the 100th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).



## Doing Ministry Today: Two Perspectives

A seminary president and a national UCC staffperson, both of whom serve in settings that prepare new ministers, were in Hawai'i recently and offered their perspectives on ministry today.

David Vasquez-Levy, President of Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California, began with his conviction that "God has always raised leaders for the church and society, and God will continue to do that. A key thing for those who are going into leadership is to try to discern what their role is and what God is already doing in the world."

David sees three key roles for new clergy. The first is to be prepared to respond to the whole community, not just the church that gathers within the traditional walls. "We have the opportunity to influence the wider community...to draw from the deep well of wisdom and spirituality that comes from the traditions we share."

Second, clergy need to take a more entrepreneurial role. "Your role is not simply to plug into an existing community, but to come and think with that community about what their resources are, what their role is, and to imagine and respond to the needs in that community."

Finally, clergy need to enter ministry with a deep sense of humility. "It's a little bit deceiving, the title of the degree, because we do not master divinity in three years. We do not master what it takes to be a leader in the church in three years." Rather, he said, seminaries need to provide clergy with basic skills such as "preaching, a good understanding of scriptures, and a good prophetic imagination," and then go forth and continuing learning.

David concluded by sharing a thought from *Strengths Based Leadership*, a book by Tom Rath and Barry Conchie, which argues that there is no such thing as a well-rounded leader, only a well-rounded team. "No one person is good at everything, but you can form, as a leader, a well-rounded team that has people in it who are good at all the things we need." This, he says, is key to ministry today.

Stephen Boyd, Minister for Chaplains and Specialized Ministers in the national setting of the United Church of Christ, said that new ministers should expect change. Trying to be all things to all people is not a helpful model for the current church. "Many of our churches are different. They may be smaller, and they may be more suited to bi-vocational ministry. This is something we need to be prepared for."

He also spoke about how his role as endorser of chaplains for the UCC has evolved with recent changes to laws that open the military to members of the LGBT community. A lot of denominations, he said, are unwilling to serve this community, and so several clergy are seeking standing in the United Church of Christ. "That's what you get for being open," he stated.

*(Welcoming Veterans, continued from page 1)*

"The biggest obstacle," Stephen said, "to helping veterans cope with moral injury is getting them to open up about their experiences." Veterans are reluctant to divulge their emotional trauma to outsiders, but a compassionate ear and willingness to help can sometimes bridge the divide.

Best practices for welcoming veterans into congregations are still in the early phases of development, Stephen noted. But he encouraged churches to follow the advice of Logan Isaac, an Iraq War veteran quoted in *Coming Home*:

"Be willing to put beliefs and theories and doctrines on the shelf and see the person standing before you. Pastors are first responders: They hold the power of life and death in their hands and all too often fail to realize it. Words can create or destroy, so use them sparingly. Show the military community that you love them by acting lovingly. Create spaces in which congregations can hear the stories. The wisdom our veterans carry home from war is not their own to carry; it belongs to the church."

## resource List

### Christmas Fund Offering

For 113 years, the Christmas Fund has provided financial assistance to those in need who have faithfully served the church.

Formerly known as the Veterans of the Cross offering, the fund is administered by the Pension Boards and provides pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency grants to families of clergy and lay employees, and Christmas thank-you gift checks to low-income retired clergy.



The theme for this year's offering is "Love Shines Through." Gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increased living costs.

Churches are encouraged to receive the offering during Advent, but donations can be made at any time. Visit [www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org) for more information.

News briefs are adapted from *UCC News*, the online news portal for the United Church of Christ. For details on these and other stories, visit [www.ucc.org/news](http://www.ucc.org/news).

## Pension Boards Offers Financial Planning Services

The Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ (PBUCC) now offers financial planning services through Ernst & Young Financial Planning Services at no cost to actively-contributing lay and clergy members of its Annuity Plan.

Members can talk confidentially to financial planners who are trained to discuss topics such as PBUCC-administered plans and programs, individual financial planning, tax issues, investments, insurance, debt management, and more.

To speak with a planner, call the Ernst & Young planner line at 1-877-927-1047, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Eastern time. You can also utilize the Ernst & Young Planning Center, an interactive website that provides eligible members with information and tools for financial planning at every stage of their lives and careers. Visit [pbucc.eyfpc.com](http://pbucc.eyfpc.com).

For more information about this service, as well as questions about eligibility, contact PBUCC Member Services at 1-800-642-6543 (choose Option 6).

## Korean Church Recognizes Global Ministries for Ecumenical Solidarity

In recognition of its advocacy for justice, peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula, Global Ministries—the overseas ministry of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—received a Gratitude Award for ecumenical solidarity from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). The award was presented during the PROK General Assembly on September 14.



The Revs. Karen Georgia Thompson and Jinsuk Chun (center) receive the PROK award on behalf of Global Ministries.

“Global Ministries and the PROK have a long history of working together for peace and justice,” said James A. Moos, Co-Executive of Global Ministries and Executive of Wider Church Ministries. “Most recently, the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) were the first churches in the world to pass resolutions in support of the reunification of the Korean peninsula. We are deeply honored to receive the Gratitude Award from our Korean partners.”

Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC Ecumenical and Interfaith Officer, and Jinsuk Chun, Executive Pastor of North American Pacific/Asian Disciples, accepted the award on behalf of Global Ministries.

## Pope’s Message on Creation Resonates with UCC Leaders

Leaders of the United Church of Christ were among 25,000 people from a multitude of faiths on hand to hear Pope Francis during a Mass on September 23 in Washington, D.C., where they learned that good people can come together on difficult issues—such as immigration and climate care—even if they disagree on other issues.



“Pope Francis was greeted warmly by the thousands gathered outside the church,” said John Deckenback, Conference Minister of the Central Atlantic Conference. “At the end of a very busy day he looked tired, but there were glimpses of his warm affectionate smile as he led the service. The focus of his homily came from Matthew’s Gospel and emphasized the need to care for each other and creation as well.”

The Rev. Deckenback was seated with representatives of the United Methodist Church, Muslim society, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Hindu community, and Sikh community for a Papal Mass at the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

## Global Ministries Assists Churches Plan Mission Trips

Is your church considering a mission trip? Global Ministries’ People-to-People Pilgrimage Program assists congregations in planning and preparing for life-changing experiences with our partners.

Through the program, local churches can draw on Global Ministries’ staff expertise and guidance, explore possibilities that best match the gifts of their group, receive reflection and orientation materials, and experience faith in new and exciting ways.

To find out more, visit [www.globalministries.org/people\\_to\\_people\\_pilgrimages](http://www.globalministries.org/people_to_people_pilgrimages), where you can also download the *People-to-People Pilgrimage Program Guide*, a comprehensive planning tool to help prepare for a life-changing mission experience.

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.

## For 100 Years, Scholarship Assists Students, Promotes Peace

Eight college and seminary students from around the Pacific Basin are the most recent awardees of the Richards Friend Peace Scholarship.



Theodore and Mary Atherton Richards

The scholarship is administered by the Hawai'i Conference Foundation and the Stewardship Missional Team of the Hawai'i Conference. It was established in 1911 by kama'aina and missionary descendants, Theodore and Mary Atherton Richards, whose intent was to attract Japanese students to Mid-Pacific Institute and to help ease growing tension between Japan and the United States. The goal was to encourage international students to study abroad, a revolutionary idea at the time because such scholarships were rare.

The first year that scholarships were awarded, five recipients from Japan were able to study at Mid-Pacific Institute for two years, and then received further funds for two years of college. The value of the scholarships then was 6,000 yen.

Over one hundred years later, the legacy continues, though scholarship amounts have grown considerably. Awards this year range from \$4,000 to \$10,000. Also, scholars are much more diverse, hailing this year from American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia and China. All are Christian college or graduate students living in a Pacific Basin country and crossing borders for their planned study.

One of the scholarship recipients is Long Wang, a doctor in China at a hospital affiliated with Zhoukou Church in Chuzhou. He applied to ease the financial burden after quitting his job to study theology.

"I gave up my salary and came to Eden [Theological Seminary] to study," said Wang in his application essay. "I will get married this summer, and this will be also a financial burden for my study," he added.

While a doctor, he volunteered time in the AIDS ministry at his church, which helped strengthen his faith and gave him the determination to serve in both a physical and spiritual way. It was then that he decided to further his studies in the United States. His goal is to apply his studies in both medicine and seminary at a hospital in China because, he wrote, "I see many physical and spiritual pains there."

Another scholar is Seumaninoa Puaina, who applied again after being a first-time recipient last year. He is a member of Vai Ole Ola Samoan Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa and is attending the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California.

Because of the scholarship, he wrote in his application essay, "I was able to successfully complete all my course work with a 4.0 GPA." Puaina's goal is to complete his Ph.D. and become a teacher.

Richards Friend Peace scholars must cross both national and cultural lines for their planned study in a country that borders the Pacific. For example, students who come from Pacific Basin nations are studying in the United States, or vice versa. Scholars must also commit to return to their country of origin and work to promote peace.

For a full listing of this year's recipients, as well as further information about the Richards Friend Peace scholarship and an application form, visit [www.hcucc.org](http://www.hcucc.org) and click on Resources.



## 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.

**Timothy Weible** resigned as Pastor of Kailua Christian Church and has moved to Northern California where he is doing Clinical Pastoral Education. His last Sunday at the church was August 23.

**Brandon Duran** was called as Associate Minister of Central Union Church beginning August 23. He previously served as Associate Pastor at Plymouth UCC in Seattle.

**Norma DeSaegher** began as Interim Pastor of Waialua UCC beginning September 1.

**Mary Herbig** was ordained by the Kaua'i Association on September 27 at Church of the Pacific. She has been called as Associate Pastor at United Church of Christ-Judd Street.

**Phyllis Meighen** began as Interim Pastor of Lihue United Church on October 1.

**Jack Belsom**, who recently retired from Lao Congregational Church, began as Interim Pastor of Kailua Christian Church on October 1.

## In Memory: Masayoshi Wakai



Retired minister Masayoshi (Mas) Wakai died September 4 at the age of 99. The Rev. Wakai was ordained in 1942 and served as minister of Hilo Coast UCC and chaplain with the State of Hawai'i Corrections Division. His family includes sons Eugene and Allan.



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October 2015

# Around the Conference

## Conference Calendar of Events

October 4-7	Fall Youth Camp
October 10	O'ahu Association 'Aha Moku-puni
October 16-17	State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches Board
October 24	Hawai'i Island 'Aha Moku-puni
November 1	Kaua'i Association 'Aha Moku-puni
November 14	Conference Council
November 27-28	Thanksgiving Holiday (Office Closed)
December 12	AHEC Board of Directors
December 24-25	Christmas Holiday (Office Closed)
December 31- January 1	New Years Holiday (Office Closed)

## How Can Churches Support Veterans?

These and other ideas can be found in *Coming Home: A Ministry That Matters with Veterans and Military Families* by Zachary Moon (Chalice Press, 2015).

- Reflect on and engage the rich teachings and practices of your church and faith tradition.
- Put beliefs, theories and doctrines on the shelf and see the person standing before you.
- Become more aware of your deeply held views.
- Hear stories without making assumptions or judgments.
- Provide space that encourages reflection, learning and integration.
- Discern how God is leading you to develop ministries using your gifts and resources.
- Accept the gifts that veterans offer to the life and mission of the congregation.
- Reach out to families of deployed service members with small gestures like a call, email, or jug of milk.
- "Post-traumatic growth" requires a community of support.
- Consider the veteran before you to be a survivor who has found the necessary resources to live in spite of challenges, problems and failures.