

Iao Pepa

Na Makani

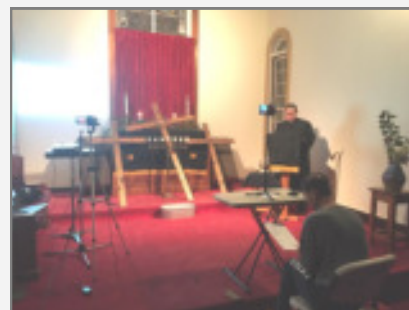
A Monthly Newsletter of Iao United Church of Christ

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March & April 2020

Blessings from Pastor Tino | “Beyond 125 Years”

I am remembering my first week in Seminary at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, California and how excited I was to begin the process of discernment. Learning about the origins of scripture and how they can apply to us today was where I discovered how the Gospels were alive in me already—I just needed to be still and listen. Many questions emerged along the way and not having answers at that very moment was okay, as soon it would be revealed. As we moved forward, one of the biggest teachings of seminary was to answer, “why attendance on Sunday worship services were going down” and “why church membership” was going down? I am also recalling this statement from one of the professors – “soon, the pastor is going to have to text his message to people’s phones because that is where the younger generation is getting their information from – social media. If the pastor is not equipped with these new social media tools, the church may be left further behind.”



So, here we are my beloved community – having to do worship services using our social media tools. Who would have ever “think-it” that we would be doing virtual worships three years ago when you called me to be your pastor? Iao Church was already broadcasting parts of their worship services on Facebook, so the church was already ahead of the curve. We have only expanded on what you were already doing before I got here – so this church has been on the move! What has been constant through this “shelter-in-place” is you continue to “BE THE CHURCH – IN WORDS AND ACTIONS.” John 4:23-24 that was read a few Sundays back reminds us that worship happens in “Spirit and truth” and wherever you are, worship is a constant occurrence. So here we are Iao Church, “kill’in-it” in being a virtual Church and yet, I am sure we all miss that human touch – I know I miss you all! Hang in there Church, we will come together again soon, our safety against this Covid-19 virus must be paramount in what we do together as a faithful community.

125 years ago, our founders could not have imagined a virtual worship service. Yet, the Spirit of God has always had this virtual quality to it as it moves from one generation to the next. Now is the time for us to write the next chapter to our Iao story. Recalling what Rev. Jack Belsom stated in his address to Iao, “remembering and celebrating is not enough, we must add new chapters to the history of Iao UCC as we move toward the 150th Anniversary.” We must write the next chapters by how we bring our dreams of Iao UCC into fruition. We are given a great opportunity by the Spirit of God to write these next chapters that coincide with how we do virtual worships, how we continue to upgrade our church campus, how we “BE” the church out in our neighborhoods and community and how we “reshape the future” with courage and faith. Let us think of coming together on Sunday mornings as a way of rejuvenation, but then the “church” must go on deployment every week to “be the church.”

Blessings with love, appreciation... and **Happy 125th Birthday Iao UCC!**
Pastor Tino

Photo above: Pastor Tino and Rong-Chao
at the Virtual Good Friday service.

May Lectionary

May 3 **4th Sunday of Easter**

Acts 2:42-47

Psalm 23

1 Peter 2:19-25

John 10:1-10

Powerful Witness

May 10 **5th Sunday of Easter**

Acts 7:55-60

Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

1 Peter 2:2-10

John 14:1-14

Enduring Witness

May 17 **6th Sunday of Easter**

Acts 17:22-31

Psalm 66:8-20

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 14:15-21

Witness of Love

May 24 **7th Sunday of Easter**

Acts 1:6-14

Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35

1 Peter 3:13-22

John 17:1-11

Spirit of Witness

May 31 **Pentecost Sunday**

Acts 2:1-21

Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

1 Cor. 12:3b-13

John 20:19-23

Strengthen the Church

The lesson in **bold** is the focus of both the message of the day and any Sunday School lesson; the italicized title is the theme for the Sunday service. •

Make sure you
test positive for
Faith. Keep
distance from
Doubt, and
isolate from
Fear. Trust God
through it all.

Above is an internet meme that Pastor Tino posted to the church Facebook Group page, on April 15. The FB group continues to be very active, with many frequent posters and commenters—both members and non-member friends of the church, and as of April 29 had **408** members (mostly thanks to Pastor Tino inviting a whole bunch of folks from his very diverse FB friends lists).

Below is a photo of the church's lower parking lot area that Lloyd took on April 22 and posted to the FB Group page. He captioned:

"Vaguely intriguing. Shadow of church steeple, white lines on the ground and in the sky. Pointing at what? Is there a message here?"



April Birthdays

4/1	Dennis Hashiro
4/2	Yukie Emoto
	Edwin Ichiriu
4/7	Tim Greathouse
	Anne Hill
	Jena Johannes
4/14	Darson Defang
	Joy Yamane
4/17	Jonathan Kaneshina
4/21	Susan King
4/22	Jane Tanji
4/23	Joshua Yoruw
4/26	Alan Yamamoto
	Pamela Ikeda
	Jefferson Yinmed
4/29	Mike Yamashiro
	JAC Yoruw
4/30	Warren Orikasa

May Birthdays

5/5	Maybelle Hashizume
5/7	Alana Fernandez
5/8	Paul Tonnessen
5/9	Anna Mayeda
5/12	Thelma Iwami
5/16	Melissa Goulart
5/18	Diana George
5/20	Michael Kaneshina
5/22	Lyndon Cornelius
5/24	Carissa Yinmed
5/28	Zachary Withrow
5/30	Noah Johannes, Jr.
5/30	Heide Israel

Tim's Mana'o | Moderator's Notes

April 2020

May the Peace of God that passes all understanding be with you!

First of all aloha and I hope you are all well during this time of COVID-19. During pandemic times like this, people are struggling with issues like child-care, jobs, the health of the family, loved ones, and finances. I personally find myself overreacting to the news of COVID-19. I feel that many of the things I have taken for granted are now being called into question.

It's moments like this that remind me that God is in charge. We are living in an imperfect world. But I know that God has a plan for us. It is often through adversity that we draw nearer to each other and to God. I believe that some good can come out of this terrible event. Here's some of that silver lining.

With restaurants being shut down, we can have more time for sitting down to share home cooked meals. Those family connections are amazing. There will be more time for us parents to instruct our children in the teaching about the Lord. Saying grace before a meal is another opportunity to model a life of faith for kids. I look forward to more time playing catch in the backyard. We need to keep praying. Let us pray for God to bring revival during this time of national emergency. We need to keep reading the scripture. We need to keep loving God. And we need to continue taking care of our neighbors. We will get through this with God on our side!

I am saddened that we will not get to spend the month of April attending worship services. I can't remember missing Easter service. I have fond memories of Easter breakfast and Keiki Easter Egg Hunt. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your request to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:6-7

God's peace, protection, joy, and strength be with you,
Tim Stewart, Iao UCC Moderator



[Editor: photo above is of the moderator's family attending virtual worship online one Sunday in March.]



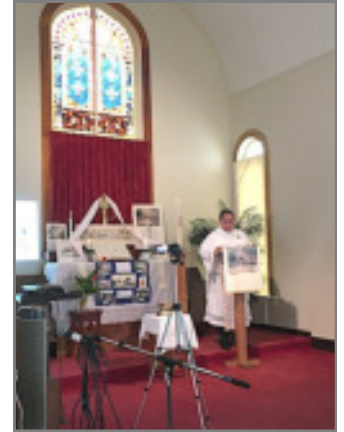
Since the shelter-in-place and work-from-home directives from state and county officials, Iao UCC has been holding its committee meetings online. Photo above left shows the April 29 Council meeting (doesn't show Lynette Shiroma, who was attending via phone audio only). The graph on the right shows the increase of # of members in our church Facebook Group. Membership had been at a plateau at around 275 individuals, but increased sharply around mid-March—mostly as a function of Pastor Tino inviting numerous friends from his varied social media contacts—to the current number of 408 as of the end of April.

“The Future Awaits”

Sermon on April 26, 2020 by The Rev. Floren“Tino” C. Cordova, Pastor

**125th Anniversary Theme: “Reflecting Our Past That Leads to Our Future”
1st Peter 1:17-23 & Luke 24:13-35**

Three years ago — when we began our journey together, we never could have imagined that we would be celebrating virtual worships together. We never could have imagined celebrating our 125th Anniversary virtually. But no matter the style or the place — we are connected spiritually by the Holy Spirit of God and as I mentioned last Sunday — as a church that is on deployment — we are still called to be the living Church of God. As the pastor of this amazing church we call Iao United Church of Christ, I hear everything and get things firsthand. What I have learned is that our church that is on deployment has handed out face masks, toilet paper, paper towels, postage stamps. Some of you have sewed face masks to those in need, have shared your fruits and vegetables from your gardens with those in need. Beloved Iao, this is the epitome of House Churches. This is what it means to “be the living church” out in our communities in a time such as this. Praise God and Amen for you Iao UCC. What better way to celebrate our 125th Anniversary than to hear you continue to be the church in words and actions. I love you Iao UCC!



Three years ago, I also remember asking each of you to “not be afraid” and to “dream big!” I also asked each of you to “not quash each other’s dreams” each one of us have for our beloved Iao UCC Church. As we virtually celebrate this 125th Anniversary of our church — I am still encouraging each of us to “dream big” and not allow fear to be our guide — but to allow the “yes we can” attitude to come into fruition and allowing that same Spirit of God that guided the founders in 1895 to lead us today and into the future. The Spirit of God is not bound by doctrines or traditions — but enables the dreams of each generation to come alive. Our church has a history that we should celebrate, and we do on this day, but we are not bound by it either — only encouraged by the many changes it has endured for the sake of the Gospels.



I am thinking about Cleopas in today’s Gospel reading and his friend on that road to Emmaus thinking that all was lost. How many times did the early church leaders of Wailuku Japanese Christian Church have to overcome hardships? How many times did this faithful community have to overcome hardships? The accidental drowning of one of our former pastors? The arrest of another pastor who was then put into an internment camp. Yes, Iao UCC — we have a history — both good and bad but through it all — the Holy Spirit of 1895 continues to be with us now in 2020. You see church, the Holy Spirit has always had a virtual quality to it — we just need to be reminded that no matter where we worship or how we worship — Christ walks with us on this Emmaus journey, even today.

I truly believe that God put not motion in 1895 and gave birth to this church for a reason. From the very beginning — from Wailuku Japanese Christian Church, to Iao Congregational Church, to Iao United Church of Christ — diversity of our community has become the prominent part of our call. Imagine with me all the changes that has occurred from 1895 to today. Imagine through our dreams, the changes God has instore for us for the future. While the Holy Spirit remains the same — again, not bound by doctrine or traditions — we the living body of Christ — the alive church of today, the alive church of the Gospels, has gone through many changes. A once Japanese only speaking church, to an English speaking church, that now includes Spanish, Hawaiian, the many languages of Micronesia, and most recently, we have welcomed into our church family, The Free Church of Tonga. This is what it means to live out — “We are a people of God.” — Amen and praise God!

Beloved Lao Church — as we move toward 150 years of mission and ministry — we cannot hold on to a sedentary religion, we must acknowledge a religion that appreciates our past, but one that does not cling to it. We cannot hold on to a religion that clings to a building or to dead wood we sit on every Sunday. If there is one thing we should be learning from these past few Sundays in quarantine — is that the church is where we stand — and where we stand is Holy ground my beloveds. Where we stand is the church and it is Holy. As free people of God — let us bring all of our hopes and dreams to God table and pray and discern how we make those dreams come alive for our generation and the next. There are many ways in which churches of today have had to transition and become nimble. Another lesson we should be learning in our world today. Rong and I have learned about how sound and video are heard and seen from your perspective and how we are nimble enough to make necessary adjustments at a moments notice. How far our virtual worship has gone around the world has amazed us — not only to the mainland, but to places in Africa, Venezuela, Brazil, Guatemala, just to name a few. Our family has grown because of our virtual world reality of today. So we cannot tie ourselves to ideas and buildings and furniture that are permanent and immovable. We must be nimble enough to change that is mission and vision focused.



As many of you know, we have begun to put together a 3-, 5- and 10-year strategic plan. That plan is still working its way through the process and those who were at the Congregational meeting in January received a small glimpse of the process. The Pastor's Vision I put together for the Strategic Planning Committee has already been implemented in many ways because of the support of not only the local church, but from help of many supporters — a new sound system, the projection capabilities in the sanctuary, air conditioners in Kanda Hall, new fans in Kanda Hall, new water heater in Kanda Hall and now the ability to do virtual worship on social media outlets. These are many dreams that some of you have suggested — like a certified kitchen, air conditioning in the sanctuary, storage space in Kanda Hall, etc. These are big dreams and visions that mean a lot to members of our church family. We don't have to get them done tomorrow, but we need to pray and discern in the process of "yes we can" type of attitude. How do we continue to support our Youth, the next generation and keep them engaged as a living and vital part of our church family?

As we travel together on this our Emmaus road, let us not get trapped by doubt and fear and on the nay-sayers — but to remain focused on mission and vision where God is calling us to be in 2050. Let us not hold on to religion of the past but move toward a future we can shape. As the song that Pastor Jack Belsom wrote begins with — "We can shape the future. It's God's way" which was the theme of this church in 1995 for the Church's Centennial Celebration. Not only do we celebrate Lao's 125th Anniversary of being a faithful church all these years — but we also celebrate that moment in which the Gospels became alive in us — and moved us into oneness with each other and with the Divine. As Pastor Jack stated so eloquently this morning — (quote) "remembering and celebrating is not enough — we must add new chapters to the history of Lao UCC as we move toward the 150th Anniversary." (end quote) This is an invitation in putting words into action as this church has and continues to do for many years to come. New Chapters do not get written unless we create a new story for them. New stories do not happen unless we have a vision and dream for them.

So, let us close with this. Let us go forth and create these new stories for the next chapters of our history. Let us continue to be people of God that move with such boldness and purpose without fear and doubt. We do not need to accomplish our dreams by tomorrow — we only need to move forward, one step at a time, one day at a time in faith — knowing that Christ walks with us on this our Emmaus journey. Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho and Alleluia.

A cellphone text message from **Anna Mayeda** the day after the 125th Anniversary virtual worship service:

*Happy Monday—just wanted to say how much I enjoyed your 125th celebration service yesterday...
...thank you so much for your efforts and love that went into providing us a meaningful service!*

How the Virus Stole Easter

by Kristi Bothur (with a nod to Dr. Seuss)

'Twas late in '19 when the virus began
Bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.
People were sick, hospitals full,
Doctors overwhelmed, no one in school.
As winter gave way to the promise of spring,
The virus raged on, touching peasant and king.
People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen.
They YouTubed and Zoomed, social-distanced, and cleaned.

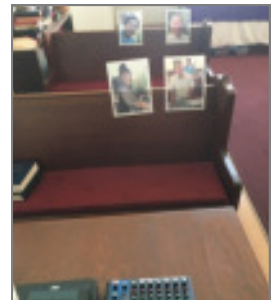
April approached and churches were closed.
"There won't be an Easter," the world supposed.
"There won't be church services, and egg hunts are out.
No reason for new dresses when we can't go about."
Holy Week started, as bleak as the rest.
The world was focused on masks and on tests.
"Easter can't happen this year," it proclaimed.
"Online and at home, it just won't be the same."

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went.
The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.
The world woke Sunday and nothing had changed.
The virus still menaced, the people, estranged.
"Pooh pooh to the saints," the world was grumbling.
"They're finding out now that no Easter is coming.
"They're just waking up! We know just what they'll do!
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two,
And then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo!

"That noise," said the world, "will be something to hear."
So it paused and the world put a hand to its ear.
And it did hear a sound coming through all the skies.
It started down low, then it started to rise.
But the sound wasn't depressed. This sound was triumphant!
It couldn't be so! But it grew with abundance!
The world stared around, popping its eyes.
Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!
Every saint in every nation, the tall and the small,
Was celebrating Jesus in spite of it all!

It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!
And the world with its life quite stuck in quarantine
Stood puzzling and puzzling. "Just how can it be?"
"It came without bonnets, it came without bunnies,
It came without egg hunts, cantatas, or money."
Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.
"Maybe Easter," it thought, "doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Easter, perhaps, means a little bit more."
And what happened then? Well...the story's not done.
What will YOU do? Will you share with that one
Or two or more people needing hope in this night?
Will you share the source of your life in this fight?

The churches are empty - but so is the tomb,
And Jesus is victor over death, doom, and gloom.
So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer,
As the virus still rages all around, everywhere.
May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.
May the world see the church is not a building or steeple.
May the world find Faith in Jesus' death and resurrection,
May the world find Joy in a time of dejection.
May 2020 be known as the year of survival,
But not only that - Let it start a revival.



Pastor Tino was at an online meeting with his colleagues from the Hawaii Conference when he heard someone say it would be a wonderful idea to put portraits of parishioners on the empty pews of churches that were holding virtual worship services. This newsletter's editor thought this idea quite appealing and right up his alley, so found photo portraits of many church members, printed them, and put them on the pews so that Pastor Tino and Rong could look out at the virtual congregation while leading virtual worship on Sunday mornings. Some of these portraits are from many years ago, discovered in the hard drive of one of the old PCs stored in the church office. Our neighbor Nur Gibson has taken to putting floral and plant offerings in front of photos on the pews at the lanai, in honor of the absent church members (below).



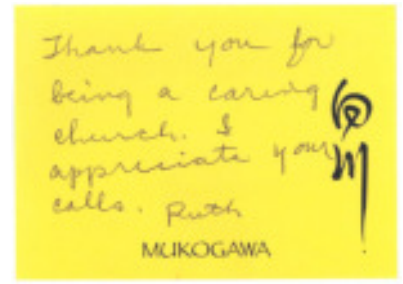
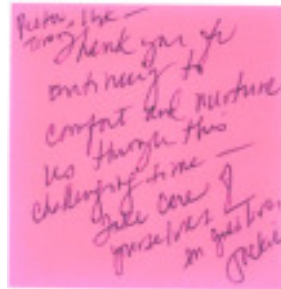
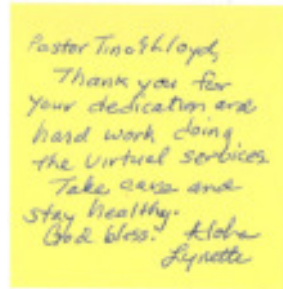
Thoughts of Aloha | ...words by and about Iao UCC members and loved ones

Examples of very thoughtful notes sent in by folks along with their donations, offerings, or pledges.

From left to right:

Lynette Shiroma,

Jackie Murai, Ruth Mukai



A Hui Hou, Aunt Joyce



On Saturday, April 25th, Rita Whitford posted this on the church's Facebook Group page: "For those of you who remember **Joyce Romero** who had a wonderful voice and sang solos and in the choir for a number of years, passed away this morning." This was followed by responses from various folks:

"She will be missed by many not only in our church community but also many people in the Maui community. She shared her music talent with so many of us musicians." (Karyn Sarring)

"Even before Iao UCC choir I had the pleasure of singing and acting with Joyce. She was a beautiful gift from God." (Craig Bode)

The photo on the left is from Joyce's friend Peter Janes Brown, who wrote: "Lady Joyce Romero has taken her final curtain call. That laugh which lightened everyone and every moment has been silenced. Her voice, which she continued to share with the Maui Madrigale and the Maui Chamber Orchestra Chorale will be missing. Flights of Angels wing thee to thy rest Lady Joyce. Rest in peace." (Shared by Tim Greathouse)



The photo on the left is a selfie Carolyn Kamidoi took with her mom, whom she was visiting in Leahi Hospital in Honolulu, sometime in mid-December of last year. I had happened to call Carolyn on FaceTime when she was with her mom, and got to chat with her a little bit. Carolyn later texted me this photo, saying: "Thank you for talking to mom. You made her day!"

Yoshino Okada (aka Sandra) passed away on April 8, 2020. She was born on July 20, 1921.

In a text conversation with Carolyn, she said:

"I'm comforted knowing that Mom and Dad are finally side by side together again. After she became a resident at Leahi, Dad visited her every day. And even after Dad was in Maunaloa, he continued his daily visits. I'm so grateful for all the prayers she received being a part of Iao UCC's prayer list for the past 10 years."

~ L. Nebres

Below is a card from beloved friends and longtime Iao UCC members Keith and Karen Moody.

(Image below is the front of the card.)



Lloyd:
Thank you for keeping us updated on Iao's activities. Our church here has held worship and meetings via Zoom, and I thank God for the advances in technology and communication which allow us all to remain connected. We are being well looked after by the staff at Aloha Creek, even receiving a roll of toilet paper per resident every week!! We pray that you on Maui remain healthy and that medical services there are adequate to accommodate residents' needs.
Love & Bless,
Keith & Karen

Life-giving, & very healthy calamansi (Philippine Lime) fruit that Dan Kamidoi gathered from the backyard tree at his dad's old house in Wailuku, and



which he gave to the church secretary who had a bad cold and who revived soon after drinking ginger tea infused with these wondrous fruit.

Tri-Isle Association HCUCC churches with virtual worship services:

All these services are 'broadcast' live (mostly via Facebook Live) on Sunday mornings in the time noted below, but are also archived on these churches' FB pages and can be viewed at any time. See also TIA President Warren Orikasa's note, quoted below right.

Iao United Church (Wailuku)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/groups/iaoucc

when: **Sunday mornings, 9:30 a.m.**

e-mail: iaoucc@hawaiiantel.net

Ka'ahumanu Cong'l. Church (Wailuku)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/kaahumanuchurch

when: **Sunday mornings, 9:00 a.m.**

e-mail: kaahumanuchurch@yahoo.com

Keawala'i Cong'l. Church (Makena)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/groups/keawalai

when: **Sunday mornings, 10:00 a.m.**

e-mail: keawalai@hawaii.rr.com

Lana'i Union Church (Lana'i City)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/lanaiucc

when: **Sunday mornings, 10:30 a.m.**

e-mail: lanaiucc@yahoo.com

Makawao Union Church (Makawao)

Link to Zoom at: makawaunionchurch.org/worship/

when: **Sunday mornings, 10:30 a.m.**

e-mail: makawaunion@gmail.com

Po'okela Church (Makawao)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/kimberly.fong.104

when: **Sunday mornings, 9:00 a.m.**

e-mail: pookelachurch@hawaiiantel.net

Wailuku Union Church (Wailuku)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/wailukuunionchurch

when: **Sunday mornings, 9:00 a.m.**

e-mail: wuc@hawaiiantel.net

Waiola Church (Lahaina)

Facebook Live: facebook.com/waiolachurch

when: **Sunday mornings, 9:00 a.m.**

e-mail: waiolaucc@waiolachurch.com



This is an example of what you would see on a Facebook Live session of Pastor Tino's virtual worship service (screenshot from the app)

From Warren Orikasa, TIA President, in the April 2020 issue of ***Da Wala'au***, newsletter of the Tri-Isle Association HCUCC:

In this issue you will find the list of TIA churches that have been holding virtual worship services (see next page). We encourage all our Association membership to "visit" other churches via these virtual services, to witness and experience both our differences and our similarities. It's good to know what our brothers and sisters in Christ are doing during this challenging time, and for us to share our communities, our stories, and our worship, with each other.

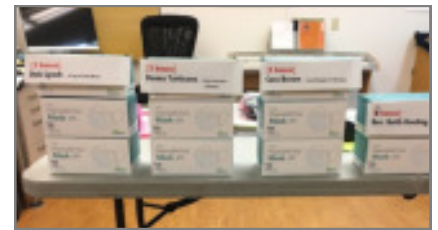
Iao UCC in the Community | Our Church's Ministries on Maui

Shelter Dinner at Hale Makana



Even during this period of the Covid-19 pandemic crisis and shelter-in-place directives, Iao UCC's ministry of serving food to the homeless continues; on Thursday, April 30th, Gail Ideue and Lynette Shiroma came by Kanda Hall to prepare food for the monthly shelter dinner at Hale Makana O Wai'ale.

Disposable Face Mask Distribution



"River Jordan Showers"



Pastor Tino sent the above letter to the Mayor's office on April 30th. This proposal is based on a suggestion by Anna Mayeda to utilize Kanda Hall's showers for homeless folks who don't have access to public restroom facilities during this shelter-in-place period. Stay tuned for more developments on this!

The Nisei Veterans Memorial Center, the Tri-Isle Association HCUCC, and Iao UCC, combined efforts to distribute thousands of **Disposable Face Masks** to the community. These masks were a gift from the Nisei Vets Memorial in Kahului; its director Diedre Tegarden contacted Warren Orikasa, who got 3 boxes from them (total of 6,000 masks) to distribute to various churches, organizations and businesses in our Maui community. Among the many folks who responded to our e-mail blasts was our sister UCC congregation in Ho'olehua, Molokai. On Thursday afternoon, April 30th, Lloyd dropped off 3 boxes at the Mokulele Airlines terminal taking advantage of the last day of their free air delivery service of supplies to Molokai). Aunt Pualani Akaka picked it up at the Kaunakakai Airport. Above right, Kahu Roy Watson of the Maluhia Church in Waihe'e came by to pick up some boxes.

The list of about 40 organizations receiving these masks is diverse indeed, and include churches other than our UCC congregations—including the Catholic church of St. Theresa's in Kihei, the Episcopalian church of St. John's in Kula, the Wailuku Hongwanji and Tenrikyo churches; organizations such as Mental Health Kokua (led by our own Susan King), Habitat for Humanity Maui, A Cup of Cold Water, the local office of the ILWU; businesses such as Ceramic Tile Plus, Hamai Appliance, Abbey Carpet, the Waiehu Golf Course shop; and many of our UCC sister churches: Waiola, Keawala'i, Ka'ahumanu, Nahiku, Maui Kosrae Etawi, Pa 'ia Hawaiian, Maui Evangelical, etc. Mahalo to Warren for spearheading this very timely effort!

“Growing Hope: During a Pandemic, Gardening Takes on New Meaning” by Axel Beers

(Excerpted from an article in the April 15, 2020 *MauiTime* magazine)



There are many names for the uncertain time we’re living in, but after some contemplation Kevin Watkins II settles on “The Great Pause.” It’s a term for the current COVID-19 era of social distancing that makes sense when used by Watkins and his team at **Maui Sustainable Solutions** and the **Maui Garden Project**.

On a morning during The Great Pause, Watkins and his team of two volunteers work a freshly cleared 10×15-foot patch of soil at Iao

United Church of Christ, the latest site to be installed with Maui Garden Project’s upcycled garden boxes. Wood pallets cut to various sizes and garden tools are prepared on the grass. The smell of the raw earth penetrates my cloth mask and settles into a space in my body that feels deep in my bones, where it awakens something planted there by ancestors long past. Watkins, long devoted to sustainable solutions to today’s problems, is thinking about the future. “What about after the pause? What happens when you press the play button again?” Watkins asks over the scraping sounds of shovels.

The answer, to him, involves the soil patch nearby and many others like it across the county which soon will be food-producing gardens. In the last month, Watkins says, Maui Garden Project has installed at least 40 custom raised beds at locations on Maui. “We gotta grow our own food and I think everyone realizes that,” he says, now that COVID-19 has laid bare the island’s vulnerable dependence on imported food. “We gotta prepare, and one of the best ways we can do that is by growing our own food.”

The grounds of the Iao United Church of Christ are quiet these days. The Preschool is closed, the rolling green grass of the campus is empty, and there is no worship service – except perhaps the one occurring between the three masked gardeners and the Earth. The Reverend Florentino Cordova, who pastors the church, has kept social distance from his congregation and held his services digitally for weeks now. The congregation is made of many *kupuna*, he tells me, and their health and safety was paramount when concerns over the novel coronavirus emerged.



Like others stuck in self-isolation, Reverend Cordova thought it was an ideal time to renovate the garden. It’s something he’s wanted to do for years. “We’ve been wanting to do raised garden beds for a while, because I want to build that bridge between our elders and our younger generation,” Cordova says. “The elders can’t be down there teaching the kids on the ground.” The church is home to a preschool, serves many elders in the community, and has a population that needs the food, “so I thought, *you know that during this downtime, we can do some of these projects and get things going here,*” says Cordova. “That way when they come back, we’ll have this already set in place.”

Cordova touches on a side effect of gardening: community and connection. “I grew up with my mom tending the garden where she learned a lot of her morals and stuff from her mother,” he says. “So the garden gives us also this opportunity to teach and to work with our hands and see how we’re connected – connected with Mother Earth – and how Mother Earth sustains us at a time such as this.” Watkins sees the same type of community growing, and hopes it will form an island-wide supply chain that will reduce dependence on imported food and increase the community’s self-reliance and independence, all while strengthening human ties and connection on the island.

Read the full article here:

<https://mauitime.com/culture/maui-community/growing-hope-during-a-pandemic-gardening-takes-on-new-meaning/>



Pastor Tino:

“God is still speaking.
Thanks to a Maui Sustainable
Solutions follower, Iao UCC
was gifted this tiller
for our garden.”

The Lao UCC Church and Preschool campus is a kind of Garden of Eden.
Here are a variety of fruits, flowers and vegetables that one can find on it, at any given time of year...



BANANA



PAPAYA



PASSIONFRUIT



GUAVA



ULU



BREADFRUIT



LEMON



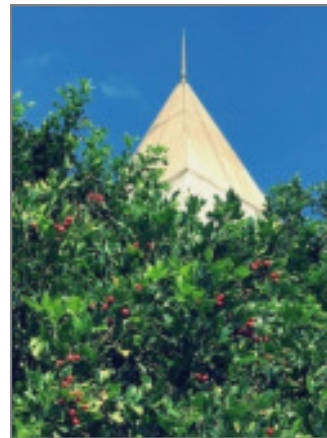
PURPLE LETTUCE



STARAPPLE



ALOE



MOCK ORANGE



LILIKO'I



SWEET POTATO



COCONUT



PLUMERIA



CAIMITO



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Mid-afternoon light, Earth Day 2020, Wednesday, April 22. Right by “Lillian’s lanai,” Waikapu side sanctuary door, Iao Church campus.

Mailed May 4, 2020
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VIRTUAL SUNDAY WORSHIP 9:30 A.M.

Pastor	Florentino Cordova
Moderator	Tim Stewart
Church Admin./Pepa Editor	Lloyd Nebres
Choir Director & Pianist	Karyn Sarring
Iao Preschool Director	Flerida Iniba

You are always welcome at Iao UCC.