

A Monthly Newsletter of Iao United Church of Christ

2371 W. Vineyard Street, Wailuku | (808) 244-7353 | iaoucc@hawaiiantel.net

September & October 2020

Blessings from Pastor Tino | "The Deployed Church of God"

And just like that – here we are entering our season of *thankfulness*. What a challenging year it has been for many of us, and we are not finished yet beloveds! There have been so many adjustments that we have had to make throughout the year, keeping ourselves safe in our homes, virtual worships, our beloved children, youth and teachers having online schoolwork, maybe some of you have had to work from home, or our essential workers having to work through this pandemic – WHAT A YEAR! So many adjustments, yet our constant has been the Holy Spirit that continues to guide and be with us



regardless of our situation. We are reminded of a song – "Our God is An Awesome God!" As a faithful community, let us keep each other in prayer, especially those who have lost a loved one and those suffering from this virus. Let us not lose hope, let us not lose sight of our mission and call and remember that our God is not only awesome, but bigger than any virus, bigger than our worries – if we but stick together as a community of faith. Hope does abound beloveds, let us hold on to hope!

Even through this pandemic, there are many things in our lives and as a church to be thankful. This year emerged an amazing new ministry of distributing food to many families in need. We are thankful to all the supporters and givers of this ministry, including our beloved Micronesian Women volunteers. We began this food distribution ministry in June of this year, along with our community partners we have been able to provide grocery bags and food to over 550 households. Some have been the same households while others received temporary groceries until they went back to work because of COVID19. Let us also be thankful that we can gather through our BlueJeans, Facebook social media applications and our 88.1 radio FM station. We are especially thankful for our amazing staff and for each of you. Many of you have been creative in how you have supported and continue to support Iao Church and for that, we are grateful. I leave you with this poem that says a lot about this year.

"*Together In Solitude: The Challenge*" by Jennifer N. Evensen. Published: March 27, 2020

If you're anxious that all have been asked to stay home, Take comfort in knowing you are not alone. Tonight at 8, wherever you are, Gaze up at the sky and pick out a star. A moment alone or with people you love, We all share the beautiful sky high above. Take 30 seconds, be still in your mind; Reflect on a happy, most memorable time. The littlest things can give hearts a lift; If we pause, take a moment, and cherish our gifts.



Blessings with virtual hugs and prayers ~ Rev. Tino Cordova, Pastor

Virtual Worship Services at: facebook.com/iaoucc.maui

Pastor Tino & Rong-Chao on their first wedding anniversary on Sunday, Oct. 4, 2020

November Lectionary

Nov 1 22nd Sun. after Pentecost

Joshua 3:7-17 Psalm 107:1-7, 33-37 1 Thess. 2:9-13 **Matthew 23:1-12** *Partners in Service*

Nov 8 23rd Sun. after Pentecost

Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25 Psalm 78:1-7 1 Thess. 4:13-18 **Matthew 25:1-13** *Tending God's Light*

Nov 15 24th Sun. after Pentecost

Judges 4:1-7 Psalm 90:1-8, 12 1 Thess. 5:1-11 **Matthew 25:14-30** *Extravagant Opportunity*

Nov 22 Reign of Christ

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24 Psalm 95:1-7a Ephesians 1:15-23 **Matthew 25:31-46** *Reigning Compassion*

Nov 29 1st Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 64:1-9 Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 **Mark 13:24-3**7 *Where Are You, God?*

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. •



Ed.: the photo above is from a Saturday afternoon several weeks ago when I went to David and Grace Murata's home in Kula to pick up a floral arrangement that Aunty had made for the church sanctuary, as she usually does every week, even though the church has not been meeting in person since late March. As it happens, Mike and Myriam Takamatsu were also there, visiting their good friends. It was a joy to see these beloved kupuna! (Below is a recent floral piece of Aunty Grace's, backlit by late afternoon sunshine streaming into the sanctuary.)



Photos below and right are of B&G folks (Dan Kamidoi, Howard Ikeda, Dennis Hashiro) and Pastor Tino upgrading the sanctuary with cable and wiring to accommodate the new audiovisual system for virtual worship (see page 10).



NOVEMBER Birthdays

- 11/2 Joshua Kenyel
- 11/11 Lynette Yamashiro
- 11/12 Robert Kennedy
- 11/16 Lynette Kaneshina
- 11/16 Rick Hayashi
- 11/19 Ruth Mukai
- 11/25 Alan Maeda

DECEMBER Birthdays

- 12/1 Alice Inouye
- 12/3 Timothy Stewart
- 12/5 Betsy Scheller
- 12/7 Jane Akitake
- 12/8 Lynn Krieg
- 12/11 Mark Mayeda
- 12/12 Karen Moody
- 12/18 Barbara Wimberley
- 12/20 Jaymina Bathin
- 12/20 Robynne Klein
- 12/21 Johnalyne Yinmed
- 12/25 Wallace Yanagi
- 12/26 Gloria Nakama



Tim's Mana'o | Moderator's Notes

Greetings and salutations!

October has come to a close and time is flying by. From our Christian perspective of the lectionary, we are still in the Pentecost Season. One particular item that stood out in my theological review was a passage of Leviticus 19:18. "You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In the lectionary, this corresponds to Proper 25. Sometimes this is referred to as the Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost. Twenty-one is a



good hand in blackjack. It is also a marker of adult life. The most glaring and obvious reference of the passage is to love your neighbor as yourself. This is reflected as a key component of the Golden Rule. In religious terminology, we can see this as evidence of altruistic reciprocity. Namely, that we treat others the way we want to be treated.

As I reflect on the nature of my Christian faith, I can see how I personally have made progress in my spiritual development. This is directly attributed to the *Open and Affirming* aspect of our church. I remember a time when the book of Leviticus was used as a clobber passage. I certainly think that this is proof-texting. This propaganda technique entails the practice of using isolated, out-of-context quotations for the purpose of establishing a proposition in eisegesis.

What helped me was reading a book written by Jeff Miner and Tyler Conolley called *The Children Are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-Sex Relationships.* I also remember Tyler Conolley giving a sermon in which he discussed the Book of Esther. These activities, participating in council/finance/leadership meetings, and engaging in self-reflection have led to my growth. Let's take the Bible seriously and not literally; let's take the opportunity to use the Bible to showcase God's love for all of us. I'm grateful for being part of this community. I'm honored to have sent both my kids to lao Preschool. I'm glad to raise my kids in this church. From Fair booths to Fun Fairs to bazaars to outreach, this is part of an amazing spiritual journey. I'm proud to be the moderator of lao United Church of Christ. I promise to do my best for lao UCC in these tough and challenging times.

In Christ,

Timothy Alan Stewart 2d lao UCC Moderator [Editor: photo above is of the Awai-Stewarts this Halloween.]

Making donations or offerings to Iao UCC via Vanco payments:



We've been updating the Iao UCC website recently, and one of the new things we've added is a prominent **DONATE** button on the navigation bar at the top of the page — we moved our online giving function from Square.com to Vanco Payments.

Also see the new pages on the website, including a historical timeline and a page gathering in one place Pastor Tino's sermons (look for it in the **Resources** tab).

<u>NOTE</u>: The Vanco donation page guarantees *secure* transactions. If you would like the Iao UCC home page to also load securely—*even though you're not engaging in financial transactions on it per se*—you can point your web browser to:

https://iaoucc.org ____ (using 'https' instead of just 'http' or just 'iaoucc.org')

Stewardship in A Time of Pandemic | "Memories, Hope and God's Future"

Consecration Sunday is on November 8, 2020 and this is when we traditionally accept the 2021 monetary pledges from members and friends of Iao United Church of Christ, along with a commitment of their time and talents.



The Stewarding Community would have been hard at work planning our stewardship campaign a month before this special Sunday. We would have been planning and hosting our kick off dinner, preparing witnessing stewards to share personal experiences of stewardship and seeking and inviting an honored guest steward to speak on November 8. Lastly, we would have culminated our stewardship campaign with a celebratory luncheon hosted by the

Stewarding Community. Unfortunately for this year, these traditional events have not come to fruition because of the pandemic. Because of unfortunate circumstances, we have scaled down our campaign but not our enthusiasm to encourage people to continue their monetary pledge and to give their gifts of time and talents to help the church.

Our theme for 2021, "*Memories, Hope and God's Future*" is a poignant one. We feel we all have fond memories of times before the pandemic but we cling to hope and see God's future ahead of us. On 2 Sundays this November, two witnessing stewards will share their experience about stewardship during our virtual worship service. They are our moderator, **Tim Stewart** and a very active youth of our church, **Sonny Yoruw**. The Stewarding Community thanks them for their willingness to share their personal views with the church *ohana*. Talk about being good stewards!

The **Pledge Form** and **Time & Talents** list are an insert in this newsletter. The Stewarding Community kindly asks that you fill it out and either mail or drop it off at the church office.



A self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided, for your convenience. With prayers, please consider a pledge amount that you can truly offer to our beloved church. Our Stewarding Community thanks all of you for your tremendous support, now and through the years to come.

Blessings from the Stewarding Community, Katherine Hashiro | Rena Hayashi | Jackie Murai | Lynette Shiroma (Rena is not in group photo above as she was on Oʻahu when it was taken.)











Iao United Church of Christ's

FOOD DISTRIBUTION MINISTRY

To be on a list for food delivery (every 2 weeks), please call Iao UCC at (808) 244-7353

or e-mail <u>iaoucc@hawaiiantel.net</u>

We will need the following information:

(1) Name

- (2) Phone number
- (3) Address / City
- (4) # of adults in family
- (5) # of children in family
- (6) **Employed?** (y/n)
- (7) Laid-off due to COVID? (y/n)
- (8) Received gov't assistance? (y/n)

Iao UCC and the community | The generosity of individuals and institutions...

A mahalo letter from Pastor Tino and Tim...

October 21, 2020 Aloha, **Jon and Jan Yokouchi**!

We received an email from the **Hawai'i Community Foundation** that you have recommended lao United Church of Christ for a grant in the amount of <u>\$1,500</u>. On behalf of the members, friends, and supporters of the church, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to both of you and the Hawai'i Community Foundation for this generous gift.

Since the pandemic began in March of this year, we have transitioned to not only online virtual worship services but in how we conduct our Council meetings. It has been a great learning experience for us as we maneuver around this virtual world. Also because of this pandemic our Food Distribution Ministry Program emerged as a new ministry for us which has had a great impact in our community. We partnered with the Lili'uokalani Trust and Maui Food Bank as a certified USDA distributor. Because of great member and community support and partnerships, we have delivered food to over 550 households on Maui every couple of weeks since June of this year.

Once again, we thank you for your generous support. You can follow us and see the great work our church continues to do for our community by visiting our website at iaoucc.org or facebook/iaoucc.maui.

Blessings with virtual hugs and prayers, Rev. Tino Cordova (Pastor) and Tim Stewart (Moderator)

PS: Jan Ikeda Yokouchi is Howard and Pam's daughter...

Mahalo to Hawaii Conference for grants to our Food Distribution Ministry

Thank you so much to the Hawaii Conference, who gave Iao UCC an initial grant of <u>\$700</u> last August, for use in our Food Distribution Ministry. Most of that grant went to gas money stipends for our volunteer drivers (mahalo to Youlida Yoruw and our Micronesian community!). And then in late October, HCUCC gave Iao another <u>\$700</u> grant also for the same ministry. These funds go a long way to ease the food insecurity many in our communities are experiencing these days.

(See the photos and info on p. 5—the page goes out as a standalone flyer to our various community groups and Tri-Isle Association member churches.)

Mahalo to the UCC (national office) for a \$3,000 grant

We are very grateful to the national office of the United Church of Christ USA, for a <u>\$3,000</u> grant for upgrading our church sanctuary's audiovisual capabilities (for virtual worship services now and in the future) and for purchase of PPE for when in-person worship resumes. We purchased touchless disinfectant gel dispensers and a touchless thermometer-stand, along with a backpack-deployed disinfectant spray machine.



Thanks to donations of plants from the gardens of Warren Orikasa, David Murata, and Howard Ikeda, we were able to do a plant-sale fundraiser in August, which raised <u>\$1,357</u> in a matter of days. Word of the plant sale went out via social media, including our church's Facebook group page, as well as via wordof-mouth. We have a few more plants on campus, which you can check out on this page (where you will also find information on how to purchase them):

https://www.iaoucc.org/temp/2020.plant.sale/more.plants.html







The Church is NOT closed... | ...it is on deployment! (Pastor Tino out and about)



Paul Tonnessen is with RevTino Cordova and 6 others. October 16 at 7:09 AM · 3



MNPD

October 16 at 6:48 AM · Ø Presenting the 2020-2021 Board of Directors for the Maui Non Profit Directors Association. Pictured from left to right is; Bevanne Bowers, Richard Carr, Sherri Dodson, Cassandra Abdul, Nicholas Winfrey, Rev. Tino Cordova, Debbie Cabebe and Marshal Norman. Thank you all for your service to people of Maui County.

(Above) lao UCC continues to be part of the larger community that does so much through the non-profit organizations of Maui. Pastor Tino is a member of the Board of Directors of the Maui Non-Profit Directors Association.

(Right) Pastor Tino was asked to bless these brandnew MEO school buses, in late October. The MEO helps so many students on Maui, and their board and leadership (mahalo, Debbie Cabebe!) continues to be the silent and effective movers and shakers in our community.









(Above) lao UCC is blessed by such dedicated servants of God who continue to feed a community in need-even through a pandemic. Lynette Shiroma and Gail Ideue preparing the baked chicken dinner for the homeless at the Hale Makana O Waiale Homeless Shelter. Others involved in this, but not pictured: the Akitake and Akitake-Hill ohanas, Kahu Kalani and Avis Wong, et al.



(Above) lao UCC continues to be a Hawaii Conference UCC and UCC's "5-for-5" church in giving and stewardship.



(Above) lao UCC celebrating Pride Month last October. Aloha Maui Pride featured Pastor Tino in a video clip posted online, which you can view at: https://www.facebook.com/alohamauipride/videos/399906027705882

EDITOR: A big *mahalo* to Jane Tesoro, who helped proofread this issue of Iao Pepa. Any remaining errors are mine alone. ;-)

"Being Generous"

Sermon on September 20, 2020 by The Rev. Floren"Tino" C. Cordova, Pastor

16th Sunday After Pentecost – Philippians 1:21-30 & Matthew 20:1-16

Poem: "Do Things" by Harold S. Kushner

"Do things for people—not because of who they are or what they do in return, but because of who you are."

A company chartered a ship for its top salespeople. These salespeople swarmed aboard and headed for their cabins. Minutes later one of them was on deck demanding to see the Captain. One of the officers asked if he could help. "My friend has a much better cabin!" the salesman said. "I did as good a job as he did, and I want a cabin just like his."

"Sir," the officer replied, "The cabins are identical."

"Yeah," said the man, "but his cabin looks out on the ocean and my cabin looks out on this old dock."

I'm wondering beloved community, when that boat goes out to the ocean, where all views, from all sides are nothing but ocean, what other demands will this individual come up with instead of gratitude? When in our life have we also lacked our sense of gratitude? Why is there always a sense of competition? Why are we perfectly content with what we have until we compare it to someone else? Competing with the neighbor down the street puts us in unnecessary competition.

Another example can be when a sparrow complained to Mother Nature, "You gave beautiful colors to the peacock and a lovely song to the nightingale, but I am plain and unnoticed. Why was I made to suffer?"

"You were not made to suffer," stated Mother Nature. "You suffer because you make the same foolish mistake as human beings. You compare yourself with others. Be yourself, for in that there is no comparison and no pain."



We find it difficult to see "self-worth" and "worth in others" because when we try to compare ourselves to others, we either end up being even more disappointed because we either think we do not

measure up to them or make others feel worse by making ourselves worth more than they – competition! Some of us have heard this before – "my building in New York City was the second tallest building in Manhattan, until the World Trade Center towers came down, then my building became the tallest." – competition! People with \$10 million run into people with \$50 million, then suddenly, they feel they do not measure up or have enough.

Here is another example. High School reunions. Have we gone to a High School reunion, not really to "catch-up" with our classmates, but to compete as to who has made it and who has not? Who has become successful and who has not? Then there is the big surprise when the High School misfit has become more successful than the class president or the team captains. The once pregnant classmate that was looked down upon has become a successful business owner. Why do we do that beloveds? Why is everything a competition? When we really think about this competition and compare it to Christ on the cross, there is no comparison no matter how much money one has, or how little money one has. Does not matter how long one as been a Christian or how new one is to Christianity. When compared to Jesus on the cross, we are equal in the eyes of God.

Why do we think that someone who has black, brown, white or any other tone of skin color is any different in the eyes of God? Why do we feel we have to compete for God's love and attention? What makes us unique is how we express our individuality and our way of being generous. As we approach our time of Stewardship each one of us has our own way of being generous – with our time, talents, and treasures. Sometimes we get too caught up in comparing these



three elements of stewardship with each other. We either end up being disappointed in ourselves, I am not doing enough or in them, they are not doing enough as if whoever does more will enter the gates of heaven sooner. What we do for Iao Church comes from the heart and the heart tells us we are doing too much, or we are doing too little. My task as a Pastor is to first, praise God for you, for your time, talents, and treasures and then get you to ask yourself, not to compare with others, but to ask your own hearts, are you doing too much, to a point of burnout or can you do a little bit more? If you ask Pastor's "what can I do" – Pastors always have a "to do list" handy.

Our scripture reading tells us that there are people being hired at a different time of the day. Some were hired on the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour and finally when there was only one hour left in the workday. It is believed that when the grapes were ripening towards the end of September in Palestine, any amount of work was welcomed so that the grapes would not rot on the vine. Beloved lao Church, beloved virtual world, any amount of time, talent, and treas-

ure that you can contribute to the Ministry of lao Church is a blessing. When we allow our hearts to speak, we know the Pono thing to do, we know the right thing to do...Amen! When we allow our hearts to speak about our generosity, we know if we are being good stewards of our time, talents, and treasures...Amen? Not comparing ourselves with anyone else but focusing on our own hearts.

The owner of the vineyard called for all the laborers to be gathered so that he could pay them. Can we imagine for a minute, the gratitude that the owner had that the grapes were not going to rot on the vine and that he could sell them at the market? I am also trying to imagine what the owner's heart was feeling – this sense of gratitude, this sense of being generous with his wealth. The people hired from the third, sixth, ninth and last hour of the workday were given one denarius for their labor. A denarius was an ancient Roman silver coin that could probably buy ten mules in those days. So, one denarius was worth a lot in those days, but instead of being grateful, what happens – competition happens! You see beloved community, when the owner hired each of them to work, he agreed to pay them one denarius for



their labor. He did not hire them to compete with one another as to who would work the longest, the hardest or pick the most grapes – they all were given the same amount of pay at the end of the day. For those hired earlier in the day, their most important part was to compare themselves to those hired at the end of the day – not to show gratitude for the denarius they received, but to compare and compete with someone else. Of course, in today's context, we do not do that, we have an hourly wage now, but do we have equal pay for equal work – No! Do we have comparisons and competition – yes! Imagine the complaining if women were hired and paid the same as the men by the owner of the vineyard.

Let us close with this beloveds. Let us not fall into the trap of comparison or competition. Let us not be measured up by the size of our accomplishments, our pocketbooks, or our ability to give more time, but by our generous giving. Let us not be measured up by how much more we give or how less we give than others. Instead, let our own hearts do the measuring. Our own hearts, with all honesty, will disclose to us if we are being generous givers of our time, talents, and treasures. Some can give more, some cannot, but what we should focus on is being grateful for those who can give a lot and those who give all they have – for in God's eyes, they are all one denarius.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.

Virtual Worship in the time of COVID | The sanctuary as audiovisual studio...









Thanks to a **\$3,000** grant from the United Church of Christ, we upgraded our sanctuary's audiovisual capabilities for a more professional virtual worship experience. (A HUGE mahalo to **Deanna Reece**, the Interim Vice Chancellor of Information Technology at UH Maui Campus, for consulting with us on the equipment to purchase, and to actually helping us set it up. She actually did this work gratis, for which we are very grateful indeed.) Part of the grant was also used to purchase PPE and related supplies, for when in-person worship will resume at Iao UCC. Speaking of that time, we will continue to stream our worship services live to the virtual world online. (P.S.: that is Pastor Tino up on the ladder, safely held up by Dennis and Bency, and by an unseen divine force. ;-))



In Dec. 2017, **Gail Okawa**, a granddaughter of **Tamasaku Watanabe**—who was the pastor here at lao Congregational Church from 1922-35—flew over to Maui from Honolulu, joining us for the dedication of the new building marquee and historical plaque for Watanabe Hall—which now houses lao Preschool. At the time, Gail was working on a book about her grandfather and his generation of Japanese-Americans from Hawaii who were imprisoned in the WW2 internment camps.

This fall, Prof. Okawa's book—Remembering Our Grandfathers' Exile—was published by UH Press. From the UHP website: "It is a composite chronicling of the Hawai'i Japanese immigrant experience in mainland exile and internment during World War II, from pre-war climate to arrest to exile to return. Told through the eyes of a granddaughter and researcher born during the war, it is also a research narrative that reveals parallels between pre-WWII conditions and current twenty-first century anti-immigrant attitudes and heightened racism. The book introduces Okawa's grandfather, **Reverend Tamasaku Watanabe**, a Protestant minister, and other Issei prisoners—all legal immigrants excluded by law from citizenship—in a collective biographical narrative that depicts their suffering, challenges, and survival as highly literate men faced with captivity in the little-known prison camps run by the U.S. Justice and War Departments."

You can find out more about the book—and purchase it—at the UH Press website: **<u>uhpress.hawaii.edu</u>** (search for the title of the book, or for Gail's name).



Blue Christmas Service 7 p.m. • Monday, Dec. 21 VIRTUAL SERVICE @: facebook.com/iaoucc.maui



Is there something—or someone— missing from your experience of Christmas? Is your heart somehow not into the frivolity and gaiety of the season? Have you recently suffered loss of one kind or another... and find it impossible to enjoy this festive time of year? Has COVID-19 affected your spiritual wholeness in some way? Do you wish to have a quiet, more reflective service as a way to experience Christmas? If so, Iao UCC's Blue Christmas virtual service may be for you.

Please join us online, and invite a friend or family member you know who would appreciate such a service and light a candle for your loss.

CHRISTMAS EVE 7 p.m. • Thur., Dec. 24 VIRTUAL SERVICE @: facebook.com/iaoucc.maui





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Pastel skies at a dusk above Waiehu... ...sometime in early November.

Mailed November 6, 2020 Address Services Requested

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VIRTUAL SUNDAY WORSHIP | 9:30 A.M.

at: FACEBOOK.COM/IAOUCC.MAUI

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

You are always welcome at Iao UCC.