



A Monthly Newsletter of 'Īao United Church of Christ

2371 W. Vineyard Street, Wailuku | (808) 244-7353 | Email: office@iaoucc.org

March 2026

Kahu Kalani's Connections

Recently, the weather in Hawai'i has turned quite chilly, echoing the cold experienced across the United States, where snowstorms have swept over the East Coast, laying down record amounts of snow. Our recent travels took us to Hokkaido, where we ventured through a beautiful winter landscape. Just before our arrival, a blizzard left behind six feet of snow, creating a true winter wonderland. In times like these, there is something deeply comforting about staying indoors and enjoying a hot cup of soup. As the cold begins to fade, it feels refreshing to throw open the windows and doors, allowing fresh air to flow in and taking the opportunity for some deep cleaning.



Spring cleaning is a tradition passed down through generations. For example, in ancient Persia—now modern-day Iran—the arrival of Nowruz, the Persian New Year, marks the first day of spring. This celebration, which has been observed for 3,000 years, involves a thorough cleaning of the home: washing rugs, scrubbing floors, and clearing away clutter to welcome the new season.

Spring is also the season of Lent, a time dedicated to cleansing our hearts through repentance for wrongs committed both knowingly and unknowingly—whether by action or by failing to act as we should. Lent lasts for forty days, beginning with Ash Wednesday and ending on Holy Saturday, which is the day before Easter. During this period, we are encouraged to draw closer to God by praying, fasting, and engaging in deeper reflection. This prepares our hearts and minds for Good Friday and the joyous celebration of Easter. Let us join together in this “cleaning house” tradition, so we may fully celebrate Easter and embrace the gift of life offered to us through Jesus Christ.

Lastly and very importantly, I would like to give my personal mahalo to Pastor Lauren who has guided us through this past year with her overflowing exuberance, steady leadership, and much aloha. She has lifted us up with her music and meditations. Her love for the Kosraen community has drawn all of us in deeper. She has never quieted her voice for those who have been silenced. As I sit in what used to be her office, I realize that once again, I am taking her place in a role she played. This happened on the national level as we helped plan conferences for chaplains for the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education or served as chair of the chaplains and religious leaders of the Hawai'i Association of Independent Schools. I pray that I may be able to carry on what Pastor Lauren has started and continue to take us further on our journey as a church.

On this journey with you,

Kahu Kalani

WORSHIP

March 1: 2nd Sunday of Lent

(Communion Sunday)

Title: *You Want Me to do WHAT?!?!*

Preacher: Kahu Kalani

Scripture: John 3:1-17

Greeter: Shannon Ribao

Readers: Kemberly Lopez, Dom Defang

Musician: Maki Rickard

Aloha Hour: Anna Maeda and Dale Schwarz

March 8: 3rd Sunday of Lent

Title: *The Parable of the Trees: A Lesson on Leadership*

Preacher: Rev. Dr. Jonathan Roach

Scripture: Judges 9:7-15

Greeter: Shannon Ribao

Readers:

Musician: Niko Nemoto

Aloha Hour: Kalani and Avis Wong

March 15: 4th Sunday of Lent

Title: *Looking But Not Seeing*

Preacher: Kahu Kalani

Scripture: John 9:1-12

Greeter: Shannon Ribao

Readers: Kemberly Lopez, Dom Defang

Musician: Christophe Javon

Aloha Hour: Linda and Danny Johannes

March 22: 5th Sunday of Lent

Title: *Called to Life*

Preacher: Kahu Kalani

Scripture: John 11:1-45

Greeter: Shannon Ribao

Readers: Kemberly Lopez, Dom Defang

Musician: Dale Schwarz and Ann Barclay-Rovner

Aloha Hour: Jackie Murai

March 29: Palm Sunday

Title: *Called to Life*

Preacher: Kahu Kalani

Scripture: John 11:1-45

Greeter: Shannon Ribao

Readers: Kemberly Lopez, Dom Defang

Musician: Christophe Javon

Aloha Hour: Kosraen Etawi

Building and Grounds Community

The Buildings and Grounds community continues to seek ways to reduce our power demands. To help with that, the 2 pole lights in the upper parking lot were changed to LED lamps which use only 25 watts, a huge power savings. Thanks to electrician Mike Fitton (Joy Yamane's brother) who was visiting Joy, who helped us with this. We also changed the Fujitomo Hall halogen parking lot flood light and the sanctuary sidewalk to Kanda flood light to LED fixtures now using only 25 watts.

Thanks to Mike Petersen and his big RAM truck we were able to recycle 750 lbs. of metal that was taken to Hammerhead Metal Recycling.



Cynthia, Bryn, Ivy Campbell, and her husband Gavin have started work on the rusting lumber rack by Kanda Hall. Much scraping and sanding needed to be done to prolong

the life of the shelving.

We look forward to the Douglas High School students from Juneau, Alaska who will be staying in Kanda Hall 2/28 - 3/7/2026. They are sponsored by Habitat for Humanity Maui. This is their 5th trip to Maui to help Habitat for Humanity build homes.

We also have a new AA group meeting on Mondays starting March 9, 2026, from 6:30 - 9:30pm in Kanda Hall. This brings us a total of 5 AA or AI Anon groups meeting at our church providing much needed help for those striving to live sober.

'Īao Preschool Community



We have kept the children busy in the month of February with a number of visitors or activities. On February 6, Doctor Emilie Sumida came to teach the children about dental health and do some activities with them! Dr. Sumida showed the keiki how to properly floss and brush their teeth and allowed them to use real dental tools.

On February 20, we walked to the County Building and saw the lion dance and kung fu demonstrations from the Shaolin Arts Academy from O'ahu! We came back and played with our puppets and pretended to be the lion dancers and drummers.



We had a visit from the Bookmobile on February 23. Librarian Auntie Jessica and driver Uncle Tinker showed the children around and told them a story. The children were able to choose a book to take home for their parents to read to them.



We will be on recess for Spring Break March 16-20, 2026.

Justice and Witnessing Community

We have attended two protests since the beginning of the year: (a) Stop the Illegal War on Venezuela on Saturday, January 10, 2026, from 4:30 pm – 6:00 pm and (b) ICE out for Good on Saturday, January 31, 2026, at 4 pm.

To help protect our church members should Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents come to our church campus, a training was held on February 8, 2026, after service. We roleplayed potential scenarios and how to respond to each scenario. Four people have served to be the point of contact should ICE arrive: Lauren Akitake, Cheryl Matsui, Gerald Montano, and Shannon Ribao. As reminder, the rest of members must not speak to ICE and refer them to our point of contact.



We also ran a campaign calling on Congress not to provide additional funding for the Department of Homeland Security unless safeguards are made on ICE activity. Congress so far has not passed such a bill and the US Government remains in partial government shut down.

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We are also urging Hawai'i State Representatives to pass HB 1875, the Gender-Affirming Care Shield Law. So far, it has passed its first two readings and passed out of the first joint committee. A hearing is being held by the Judiciary and Hawaiian Affairs Committee on February 24, 2026, at 2 pm. We have encouraged members of the community to submit testimony in favor of the bill.

Looking to the month ahead, the Justice and Witnessing Committee sets forth the following goals:

- We'll continue to use our voice to urge Congress not to fund DHS unless there are significant guard rails placed for ICE
- We'll continue urge the Hawai'i State Legislature to pass HB 1875
- The next No Dictators Protest is on March 28, 2026, from 2 – 6 pm.

Special thanks to Pastor Lauren, who urged us to resurrect the community and has served as inspiration for us to fight for justice.

Learning Community

Sunday School is going full speed ahead. February was filled with stories that showed a relationship with the Winter Olympics.

The keiki, under the supervision of Auntie Coreen, made lovely stained-glass windows while Caetlyn helped make stain glass hearts that will be distributed to Hale Makua.

On Sunday, February 15, the children recited the Old Testament books of the Bible during the Keiki message. They then sent out a challenge to the congregation to also learn them including the New Testament. On Easter Sunday once again the keiki will recite the books asking the congregation to join in. A good challenge for us all.

We are still looking for Bible Study facilitator(s). Please be in prayerful consideration that you might be able to fill this missing link.

Our high school 2026 graduating seniors from Baldwin High School are: Jaydee Sohphoh Hadley, Paht Johnson Jr Phillip, Darcean Phillip, and Senyora Obet. Graduating from Maui High School are Noah Johannes and Shanielle Alik Tilfas. If you have additions or corrections to this list, please inform Dawna Krueger.



Our March studies will be Jesus calms the storm (Matt.8:23-27), Jesus feeds 5,000 (John 6:5-13). Jesus heals the blind man (John 9), Jesus defeats death (John 11:1-44), and Palm Sunday: The Triumphal Entry (Luke 19:28-49).

Stewarding Community



We were blessed with Pastor Lauren's guidance during our meetings. She was an integral part of the church's 130th anniversary last year. She will be dearly missed as we bid **a hui hou**.

Mahalo for the contributions to the Henry 'Ōpūkaha'ia scholarship fund received on February 15. The funds were sent on to our Hawai'i Conference, United Church of Christ.

March is the time for this special offering: **One Great Hour of Sharing**. Special envelopes are available in the sanctuary. March 29 is the final collection date.



When you give to **One Great Hour of Sharing**, you are light for people in need. You offer light when disasters strike and when chronic conditions threaten families and communities. You are light not just in the immediate future, but also for the long haul. When you give, you restore not only structures but also transform lives. Your gift ensures that no matter how difficult the situation is, light shines.

Be the light. Give to One Great Hour of Sharing.



ucc.org/oghs

Thank you for generously supporting the special offerings and your willingness to pledge throughout the year.

Worshipping Community

Aloha Pastor Lauren and Welcome Kahu Kalani

Over the past year and two months, our congregation has been truly blessed to have Pastor Lauren serve as our settled pastor at 'Īao UCC. From the very beginning, she infused our church with her exuberant spirit and brought creative ideas that enriched both our worship services and daily activities. As Pastor Lauren prepares to leave Maui, we extend our heartfelt best wishes and send her forward with our blessings, confident that she will continue to follow the path God has set for her. Her time with us has left a lasting impact, and we are grateful for her leadership and dedication. At this important time of transition, we are excited to welcome Kahu Kalani Wong as our bridge pastor. We look forward to the new perspectives and guidance Kahu will bring to 'Īao UCC, trusting that our community will continue to grow in faith and fellowship under his leadership. Together, we will continue to build a vibrant and inclusive fellowship, rooted in faith and aloha.



Please be sure to attend our Special Easter Services that will be held jointly with Wailuku Union Church and Ka'ahumanu Church.



Maundy Thursday Service: Thursday, April 2 at 6:00 pm at 'Īao United Church of Christ



Easter Sunrise Service: Sunday, April 5 at 6:00 am at Ka'ahumanu Church.



Easter Service: Sunday, April 5 at 10:00 am at 'Īao United Church of Christ

"We are a people of God, living and sharing the love of Christ and reflecting that love in words and actions."



Celebrating Life as a Family

A Hui Hou Pastor Lauren

The past several weeks have been a non-stop celebration of our time with Pastor Lauren. She was truly adored by all of us and the various groups each marked the end of her time with us in different ways. Pastor Lauren shares her mahalo to each and every one of you, "My heart is full and my gratitude overflows from all the aloha expressed with lei, smiles and tears, singing, kind words and gifts, and all the amazing food at the second potluck in a row! Mahalo - arigatou - kulo and God bless all the next adventures... as Kahu Kalani brilliantly reminded us, so that WE might BE a blessing to our world. A hui hou... until we meet again!"



Farewell from the Preschool



An "over-the-top" aloha from the Kosraen Women.



Singing a final song with the Kosraen Etawi.



One last visit with Rita Whitford.



Aloha from our Moderator

Aloha Pastor Lauren,

As you prepare to step into this next chapter of your journey, we find ourselves reflecting on just how much you have meant to us and to our church Ohana. It's hard to put into words the depth of our gratitude, but we want you to know how profoundly your presence has touched our lives and our community.

Mahalo for believing in us — and for helping us believe in ourselves. Your encouragement gave us confidence, your trust gave us courage, and your steady leadership reminded us that we are capable of more than we sometimes imagine. That gift is something we will carry with us for a long time.

We are especially grateful for the way you helped resurrect our Justice and Witnessing community and our pastoral care committee.

You saw potential where others saw uncertainty, and you nurtured these ministries back to life with patience, vision, and compassion. Because of your guidance, these spaces are once again serving with purpose and heart. That kind of leadership changes people — and it changed us.

Beyond all the programs and responsibilities, what we will miss most is *you* — your charisma, your compassion, your wisdom, and the way you show up for people with such genuine care. Your sermons have inspired us, your prayers have strengthened us, and your presence has reminded us what Christ-like love truly looks like. Through joyful celebrations and difficult seasons, you have walked beside us with grace and steadfast faith.

While it is hard to say goodbye, we trust that God is leading you exactly where you are meant to be. We pray that this new season brings you joy, fulfillment, and continued opportunities to bless others as you have blessed us.

Mahalo for your kindness, your courage, and the many ways you have shaped our church community. You will always remain a cherished part of our journey.

With love and aloha always,

Shannon & Jaime



Notes to the 'Ohana

Check out these Special Events in March for our Micronesians Community! Pass the word around!

The UH Maui College would like to invite you and your friends to participate in the 'Ohana Smiles Dental Hygiene Day at UH Maui College on Thursday March 5, 2026, from 3-5 pm. We will have lots of giveaways such as fresh produce and jams and jellies. Our students will be ready to make appointments for cleanings during the event. At the event they will conduct screenings for oral cancer and can begin the registration process with volunteer interpreters.

'Tao UCC will be hosting a table at this event in support of our Micronesians neighbors. We need volunteers to help staff our table. Please contact Dawna Krueger if you would like to kōkua. Sign-up sheet will follow shortly on the bulletin board in the sanctuary.

NOW HIRING

Wanted: Administrative Assistant

We are looking for a highly motivated individual to serve as the administrative assistant for our church. This is a part-time 19-hours a week position. Must be proficient in Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. If you are interested in this, please contact Kahu Kalani. Please share this with others who may be interested.

Congratulations to our new church officers

At our recent Annual Meeting, new officers were elected to serve for the 2026 church year. They are (left to right)

- Shannon Ribao and Suzette Robinson- Co-Moderator
- Cynthia Snell- Vice Moderator
- Linda Johannes- Secretary
- Bryn Turner- Treasurer
- Jackie Murai- Financial Secretary
- Gayle Ideue- Asst. Financial Secretary



Congratulations, Ho'omaikai'i, Kaksakin to MaryLynn Johannes and Alani Malafu Latu!

MaryLynn Johannes and Alani Malafu Latu were married on Saturday, February 21 in Kula. The gorgeous bride was escorted in by her dashing father with her sisters serving as bridesmaids.

Congratulations to the Johannes and Malafu Latu 'ohana.



March 2026



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2 nd Sunday in Lent 10 a-Worship/ Communion 3p-6p Kosrae/Etawi SK	9a-2p Food Pantry- K	5:50-7:30 AI Anon District - K	9a-10a AI Anon S 50-6:30- Etawi Meeting K 7p-8p 'Ukulele Hui- S	9:30 IPS Chapel S 7p-8p AA- S	11:30a Ladies Lunch Bunch- L 6p-7p Kosrae Women's Fellowship- S	7p-8p AA- K
Habitat for Humanity Maui in Kanda Hall						
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
3 rd Sunday in Lent 10a Worship w/ Kahu Roach 3p-6p Kosrae/Etawi SK	9a-2p Food Pantry- K 5:45 Worshipping Mtg- Z 6:30p-9:30p AA- K	1p Visitation	9a-10a AI Anon- K 7p-8p 'Ukulele Hui- S	9:30 IPS Chapel S 7p-8p AA- K	6p-7p Kosrae Women's Fellowship- S	7p-8p AA- K
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
4 th Sunday in Lent 10 a Worship 3p-6p Kosrae/Etawi SK	9a-2p Food Pantry- K 6:30p-9:30p AA- K	Happy St. Patrick's 	9a-10a AI Anon- K Iao Pepa/Council Reports Due 7p-8p 'Ukulele Hui- S	9:30 IPS Chapel S 7p-8p AA- K	4-9 Hill Family K 6p-7p Kosrae Women's Fellowship- S	9:00 B&G mtg K 2p-5p Micronesian Cultural Day Kaahumanu Center 7p-8p AA- K
Iao Preschool on break						
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
5 th Sunday in Lent 10 a Worship 3p-6p Kosrae/Etawi SK	9a-2p Food Pantry- K 6:30p-9:30p AA- K		9a-10a AI Anon- K 5:45 Council- Z 7-8p 'Ukulele Hui- S	9:30 IPS Chapel S 7p-8p AA- K	6p-7p Kosrae Women's Fellowship- S	2-6pm No Dictators Rally Ka'ahumanu Ctr 7p-8p AA- K
29	30	31	 HAPPY BIRTHDAY this month to: 4-Robyn Webb & Kawika Boro, 13-Gail Ideue, 14-Bobby Hill, 20-Shizue Defang, 21-Sonny Yoruw, 24-Danann Mitchell Hardman, 25-Jireh Yoruw, David Murata, and Danny Defang, 31-Molly Murai			Location Key S- Sanctuary K- Kanda Hall E- Endo Hall L- Lanai Z- Zoom
Palm Sunday 10a Worship  3p-6p Kosrae/Etawi SK	9a-2p Food Pantry- K 6:30p-9:30p AA- K					



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"Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other." – 1 John 4:11

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Office/Food Pantry (808) 244-7353
 Office hours: **Mon. to Thurs., 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.**
or by appointment
Food Pantry Monday 11a-2p

Email: office@iaoucc.org
 Website: iaoucc.org
facebook.com/groups/iaoucc/

IN PERSON/VIRTUAL SUNDAY WORSHIP 10:00 A.M.

Pastor	Kahu Kalani Wong
Moderator	Shannon Ribao and Suzette Robinson
Office Volunteers	Various Faithful Individuals
Pianist	Various Gifted Individuals
Newsletter	Kalani Wong, editor
‘Īao Preschool Director	Flerida Iniba

You are always welcome at ‘Īao UCC.

We are a people of God living and sharing the love of Christ through words and actions