

Bishop's Address: October 12, 2024

Aloha kākou,

We gather today from the Ahupua‘a of Honolulu. I take this moment as your Bishop to honor and give thanks for the founding patrons of our Diocese, King Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma. The land on which our Cathedral stands was entrusted to our Church by the Holy Sovereigns. I acknowledge the trust they committed to our Church in 1862 to care for their people – na Kānaka ‘Ōiwi – and all of the children of these Islands, and for our responsibility to care for all of creation. As the Bishop of the Church invited to the Hawaiian Islands, I deeply regret that we have not always fulfilled our responsibility through these many decades. We have often failed and turned a blind eye to those around us. For those things which we as the Church and as individual Episcopalians have done and the many things we have left undone that contributed to the harm inflicted on na Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and these islands, and now too of the Chamorro, the Indigenous people of the Mariana Islands on Guam and Saipan, I offer our collective lamentation as a Church for our part in colonialism and exploitation. I ask God's forgiveness. I ask the prayers of our blessed ancestors and you, God's people, that we, God's Episcopal Church in Hawai‘i – and now on Guam and Saipan as well – will have the will and courage to better fulfill our responsibility – kā mākou kuleana – to the people of all the islands of this Diocese and to God's creation.

As I come to you this Annual Meeting, my 17th since becoming Bishop, it is with the sense of thanksgiving that this past year is over.

We have lived through another year of war in Ukraine.

It is just a year since the horrific attack of Hamas on innocent civilians in Israel leading to a destructive war on Palestinians in Gaza with the death of thousands of innocents and a wrecked society. The war has now extended to Lebanon. I urge every Episcopalian to support the American Friends of the Diocese of Jerusalem.

In fact, the Geneva Academy of International Law and Human Rights identifies 110 armed conflicts in our world today.

As the followers of Christ at such a time, we must be the voices of peace with justice. We stand against anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and the voices of hate and anger.

While crime rates are generally down in the United States, we are aware of school shootings on the Continent and even it seems more gun violence in the Hawaiian Islands than we have known.

We have lived with the stress of the Maui fires for over a year just as we were coming out from the isolation and fear of the Pandemic. Though the impact on Maui was the most acute, it has impacted all of us with higher insurance rates and a changing environment.

Two years on, Guam is still recovering from Typhoon Mawar.

Inflation and, especially, the high cost of housing has caused changes in our communities.

It has been a long year. In reality, it has been a year like all years in human life. We are not unique. Stuff happens in life.

I'm reminded of the oft quoted phrase of Julian of Norwich, "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well". It can be taken as a simple statement about life.

Set in the context, Julian is reflecting on human sin and even complaining it seems about God:

"In my folly, before this time I often wondered why, by the great foreseeing wisdom of God, the onset of sin was not prevented: for then, I thought, all should have been well. This impulse [of thought] was much to be avoided, but nevertheless I mourned and sorrowed because of it, without reason and discretion. But Jesus, who in this vision informed me of all that is needed by me, answered with these words and said: 'It was necessary that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.' These words were said most tenderly, showing no manner of blame to me nor to any who shall be saved."

I share this because it is too easy to worry about how things are and to fall into inaction – even despair. Julian pushed back and listened to Christ.

We – we the Diocese of Hawai'i – are in a time of reflection and preparation. We are being called to listen for the voice of Christ.

Our challenge right now is to discern why we need to exist as the Diocese of Hawai'i. Why? Why here and why now? What does God need from us as we prepare to sail into the future.

We are preparing the canoe. We have been through storms. We must mend our sails and reprovision our stores.

How do we do this?

We must again reflect on the basic principles of our life together.

Twenty years ago, this Convention listened to the late Pualani Hopkins and embraced three Hawaiian Christian concepts. I have applied them to my time as bishop. Pua taught us about these concepts when she wrote:

"The first is that all aspects of God's creation are imbued with mana, spiritual value that comes from being created by God. Care must be taken to respect the mana of the land and sea, the plants, the animals, other people and most important, the mana of God, the Creator and source of all mana. Our own mana, should not be neglected or misused.

The second concept derives from the first. As humans created in God's image, we are responsible for respecting, protecting and preserving God's creation and its mana. In the

language of the Church, we call this “stewardship.” In Hawaiian, we call it mālama . Mālama is a call to action. Worshipping God, using God’s gifts wisely, taking care of all aspects of our health, protecting the environment, caring for and about others – these are some of the ways we mālama, our relationships with God and God’s creation.

These relationships nurture us in turn. The God we thank and praise sustains and supports us; the body and spirit we treat properly serve us so we can do God’s work in the land and sea that we care for feeds us physically and spiritually; the person who is respected and cherished meets his obligations to us in return. Mālama is about our loving reciprocal relationship with God and God’s creation

The third concept is the state we achieve when we successfully Mālama the mana, in all of creation. This state is pono, the righteousness that is the kingdom of God realized on earth when all aspects of God’s creation are in right relationship. As Christians, we strive to be pono. And when we fail, we are redeemed by God’s gift of his Son. Through him, we are forgiven and freed to try again.”

With Mana, Mālama and Pono to guide us and grounded in the Baptismal Covenant as the theological and moral basis of common life as the followers of Christ Jesus in the Episcopal Church, we must come to know one another again.

I call us in the year ahead to spiritual renewal. For that to be effective, we – the Body of Christ, the Church, the Diocese, you and me – have to trust one another and know one another. This begins within our congregations, between congregations, and with the clergy.

We are called to seek the Mana in our midst, to Mālama one another, that we might live Pono as a living example of Christ in a struggling world.

I hope – no, insist (this is something that I rarely have done as your bishop) – that every congregation engage Hō‘imi Pono. To help us – Episcopalians in Hawai‘i – live in our responsibility to engage God’s mission in Hawai‘i, the Racial Reconciliation Task Force has prepared the Hō‘imi Pono (Seeking Righteousness) curriculum. This curriculum invites us to tell our individual stories within our context of a living host culture and the many cultures of people who now call these Islands home. Based on the “Difference Course” created by the Reconciliation Leaders Network under the auspices of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and adapted and expanded by nine members of our Diocese working together for over two years, Hō‘imi Pono seeks to engage every Episcopalian in our Diocese in a healthy conversation about reconciliation that honors our host cultures, our heritage, our diversity and God’s creation. We all are called to the ministry of reconciliation. In the Baptismal Covenant, we are called to “...seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself” and to “... strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.” We must commit to Hō‘imi Pono. Ideally, I hope congregations can band together and join the conversation together.

I am looking to institute an online confirmation class for the Diocese. Why? Frankly, I have visited too many congregations where folk presented for confirmation and baptism have not been

prepared to make the promises of the Baptismal Covenant. We need a renewed shared language of faith. It may be time for all Episcopalians in the Diocese of Hawai'i to renew their faith. I challenge every adult in the Diocese to be confirmed, received or formally renew their Baptism in the next two years. We have to know who we are in our life in Christ. We need a shared language of faith and mission.

I hope the Standing Committee can visit all the islands as they have recently done so on Maui. I also hope they can engage the members of the Diocese in various ways to encourage conversation and mutual support. As the Bishop's Council of Advice, the Standing Committee serves a unique role outside the financial and management life of the Diocese in helping to plan for the future.

I will be calling on the clergy to gather with me more often in person and online throughout the next year. We need time to renew camaraderie and trust. The recent gathering in Kapolei was wonderful. We were honest with each other and We need time together. This will include time in January focused on the history, culture and future of the Hawaiian Islands. I hope we can include some learning time about Guam and Saipan as well.

While there are many things that I could mention, here are four ongoing ministries and concerns that we must keep top of mind:

1. The development of the Kapolei property is ongoing. This is a diocesan project and about something far more than the congregation of Hālau Wa'a. Feasibility studies have been completed to positive results. The possibility of partnerships to develop the property with other non-profit groups and with the support of broader Church organizations is a model for the future for many of our churches. The Kapolei Development Task Force has and is working hard on Phase II of this project looking to fund raising and public relations. There is still much to be done. I have been convinced that the way forward is practical and can be accomplished. We are on the right track as we seek to fulfill the hope when the land in Kapolei was purchased in 2010. I have confidence in Diocesan Council to continue to provide guidance on this project. We are in this project together.
2. We must continue to support and engage the Environmental Justice and Creation Care Ministry of our Diocese. We must be clear that the degradation of the environment, changing weather patterns and rising water are an existential threat to the quality of life in our Pacific islands and the world. We must continue to do more as a Diocese, in each congregation, and as individuals. In fact next year will be filled with educational offerings from this ministry thanks to a Creation Care grant from The Episcopal Church.
3. Our support for Maui and the people of Holy Innocents must not falter. Many ask – especially those who live off island – when Holy Innocents will be rebuilt. Frankly, we have no idea when or even if the building will return to the old site. Why? It is currently very unclear whether or how the County/State will allow rebuilding on Front Street right on the ocean, but especially in the area of Loko o Mokuhinia which includes the church property. We don't know what the future holds. We – the whole Diocese – has a

responsibility to the remnant of the congregation still living on the west side of Maui. The whole of Maui is still recovery from the impact of the fires, but we have a special responsibility to God's people of Holy Innocents.

4. Finally, last year the Convention decided to enter into tripartite relationship with the Diocese of Batac of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and the Diocese of Northern Luzon of the Episcopal Church of the Philippines (ECP). This is important to us as a Diocese. Why? Immigration from the Philippines continues in Hawai'i, Guam and Saipan. We have long shared a history with both the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI) and Episcopal Church of the Philippines (ECP). As transitions happen here in Hawai'i, we need to build strong relationships for the good of our Church. I hope we can send a team to Ilocos Norte in 2025 to build on the relationship and to help us in our mission.

As I noted in my written report to Convention, I deeply appreciate the Diocesan Support Center staff and our many volunteers in leadership, please be sure to thank the staff and our volunteer leaders. I do want to note that we have added four new members to our team as we look to the next year:

- Jasmi Regmi has joined as the Controller to oversee the Diocesan accounts and finances in support of our volunteer Diocesan Treasurer and governance groups.
- Andrew Arakawa is now the Canon for Ministry Formation with oversight of Waiolaihui 'ia Center for Ministry and the Bishop's liaison with the Commission on Ministry (assisting to track all those in the ordination/licensure process including helping with evaluations and recommendations), and assisting the Diocesan Support Center to provide clergy continuing education offerings and development. He has taken up this part-time position as he continues in his ministry as a Chaplain at 'Iolani School.
- Irene Malimann is now the Canon to the Bishop of Ministry on Guam and Saipan. In this non-stipendiary role, she will represent the Bishop and the interests of the Diocese as she serves as Vicar of the Episcopal Church of St. John the Divine, Tuman, Guam.
- Kalani Holokai now serves as the Community Partnership Coordinator to help to ensure that the interests of Episcopal entities on Maui (including Holy Innocents) are heard and represented with various government agencies and other outreach organizations, and to coordinate communications with the Diocese and The Episcopal Church.
 - A word about Maui. The key issue for the Holy Innocent site will be what the State/County allow as a set back and the plans for Loko 'o Mokuhinia which historically included the church property. I personally don't want us as the Episcopal Church to let our presence go in Lahaina. We'll need to be open and engaged with the community about what that might mean. No one has suggested the Episcopal Church and Holy Innocents is leaving the west side of Maui. We're still trying to discern what that ministry will be.

- The impact of the fires on all of Maui is profound. It will take years for Maui to recover. We – the whole Diocese – are one Ohana. We must stand with Maui in the days ahead.

Please get to know the new members of the Diocesan Support Center staff in their new roles. They will help build relationships and help care for the entire Diocese.

In the next year will focus on buiding relationships within the Diocese and our congregation, I hope it will be done in the spirit of our Diocesan guiding concepts: mana, mālama and pono.

I think this is important. Why? I have made no secret that I plan to retire as Bishop by the end of 2026. The Standing Committee and I have begun conversation about this and we will be formally sharing something with the Diocese in early 2025. As the details emerge, we need to talk and build relationships. I will have – God willing – two more Annual Meetings of this Convention before I retire. We will take this time to prepare, to strenghten relationship, to be solid as “One Team” for the future.

Relationships are built on trust and shared story.

As I conclude this year’s Convention address, I would like you to join me in a little exercise.

There where you stand find someone near you– maybe behind you across an aisle – someone who you don’t know from another congregation.

I would like to take six quick minutes to share the following with your partner:

1. How did you get your name?
2. Where were you baptized?
3. What is your favorite food?
4. What is the craziest thing you ever did just for fun?

Please listen closely to each other.

We will then gather in groups of four and you will intouduce your partner to the other two using only the information we have just heard. You only have 60 seconds for each persons to make your introductions.

[When all done]

You now know four siblings in Christ in a whole new way. That is a beginning. One Team, One Diocese, One in Christ.

Let us pray.

O Holy Spirit of comfort and eternal presence: spread over us, your weary and anxious people, your protective and reassuring wings, that we might be delivered from our fears of one another:

that we might experience the exhilarating freedom of welcoming even strangers without defensiveness, hostility, or suspicion, but rather with openness, hospitality, and the expectation of friendship. In the Name of Jesus, who welcomes all. Amen.