

**Search and Call Tools for Congregations**

Advancing the Spirit's guidance into God's future

**May 25, 2023**

**INTRODUCING THE NEW  
LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE**

Who  
are  
we

Who  
is our  
neighbor

Who is  
God  
calling us  
to become

?

# UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## LOCAL CHURCH PROFILE

### **Church:**

Iao United Church of Christ  
2371 Vineyard Street  
Wailuku, HI 96793  
Church Website: [www.iaoucc.org](http://www.iaoucc.org)

### **Name of Position to be Filled:**

Settled Pastor

### **Who is God Calling Us To Become?**

God is calling our church members to be courageous in spreading the Good News, gathering and uniting people, reaching out in caring and compassion across all in our community. The ideals of the church, begun with a commitment to an underserved group (the original mission was education for Japanese girls), shall be continued, sometimes working with other churches, faith groups and the unchurched.

*“God is able to provide you with every blessing, so that  
having all sufficiency in all things at all times,  
you may abound in every good work.”  
(2 Corinthians 9:8)*

## INSTRUCTIONS

The new Local Church Profile supports the calling and discernment of United Church of Christ congregations with their current or future pastoral leadership.

For many congregations, the interim time between ministers is an intentional season that is guided in part by the preparation of a Local Church Profile. Using the Profile, the church can discover its data and express its story for the reliable discernment of a search committee and the beginning of a new pastorate. Searching ministers will want to see this document in its entirety.

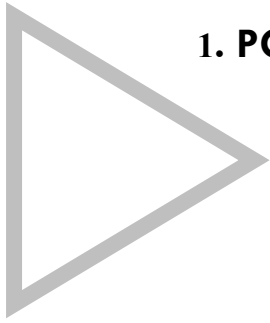
The interim season is not the only time in a church's life when it's valuable to give attention to explore a congregation's vocation. Three sections of the Local Church Profile – **WHO ARE WE NOW**, **WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR**, and **WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME** – are meant to be updated every 3-5 years. Known together as the “Discovery Document,” these three sections can be completed by a visioning group, a governing body, a transition team, or other group – not just the search committee – in order to draw forward the gifts and imaginative possibilities of a congregation. The church's engagement with the “Discovery Document” might not have the same sequence as the completed Local Church Profile that is read by candidates.

Some questions are easy to answer. Some are not so easy. Prompts are provided to stimulate narrative response if needed; these italicized prompts are merely examples from which to choose or to inspire your own. Efforts to answer the questions will prompt conversations and explorations and story-tellings and many prayers. As the Spirit moves throughout the process, congregations will shape a collective articulation of Christ's leading (**WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME**). This last question to be answered becomes the first section to be read by searching ministers in the Local Church Profile, and it is boldest and most actionable piece for faithful leadership into the future.

Your conference can provide materials referenced in the Local Church Profile, such as the 11-Year Report containing data as reported by your congregation annually to the UCC Data Hub, and MissionInsite reports containing demographic information on your community. More information on types of pastorate in the United Church of Christ can be found in the Call Agreement Workbook. Be sure to use the Call Agreement Workbook's Scope of Work to describe in this Local Church Profile the position being sought.

When it is time for ministerial search, the conference can counsel you on posting the Local Church Profile together with your public listing at UCC Ministry Opportunities (<http://oppsearch.ucc.org>).

The last page of the Local Church Profile contains a statement that parallels the consent statement signed by ministers in the UCC Ministerial Profile. In keeping with the covenantal relationship between a church and those it seeks to call, this statement encourages an open, honest exchange of information. On behalf of the United Church of Christ, and on the basis of the best knowledge available to them, your conference staff will validate your completed Local Church Profile when it is ready to be shared in relationship with prospective new leaders.



## 1. POSITION POSTING

- a. LISTING INFORMATION
- b. SCOPE OF WORK
- c. COMPENSATION & SUPPORT
- d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

### 1a. LISTING INFORMATION

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Church name: Iao United Church of Christ  
Street address: 2371 Vineyard Street, Wailuku, HI 96793  
Supplemental web links: [www.iaoucc.org](http://www.iaoucc.org)

Additional ecumenical affiliations (*e.g. denominations, communions, fellowships*):

**Conference: Hawaii Conference UCC**

Rev. Dr. David Popham, Conference Ministry, Hawaii Conference UCC

700 Bishop Street, Suite 825, Honolulu, HI 96813

Email: [dpophm@hcucc.org](mailto:dpophm@hcucc.org)

Telephone: (808) 537-9516

Fax (808) 531-2637

Association:

‘Aha O Nā Mokupuni ‘O Maui, Moloka‘i a Me Lāna‘i

**Name of Search Committee Chairperson/Contact Person:**

Shannon Ribao

2371 Vineyard Street, Wailuku, HI 96793

Telephone: (808) 244-7353

**Summary Ministry Description:**

The primary focus should be to support current members of the church and their families; keeping them involved in the church and the Word of God, making for a communicable, happy faith loving church community.

- Get to know members by name. (Be the shepherd who knows their flock.)
- Provide support for our members who are homebound, in care homes, or hospitalized, with activities/prayers.
- Continue/create programs to attract new and younger members.
- Continue diversity and support the natives of Micronesian culture.
- Continue to expand LGBTQI+ commitment to the broader community.
- Nurture partnership with other denominations.
- Welcome new ministry initiatives:
  - Online programs
  - Food Bank Distribution
  - Community Outreach



**Iao Church of Christ Mission, Vision and Covenant**

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

**We are a (*diverse*) people of God, living and sharing the love of Christ and reflecting that love in words and actions.**

### **VISION STATEMENT**

**We will be a more inclusive and faithful community learning:**

- **to give voice to the silenced,**
- **to celebrate our commonalities,**
- **to use God's gifts,**
- **to bridge differences, and**
- **to practice reconciliation**

### **Covenant**

**We covenant one with another to seek and respond to the Word and will of God. We purpose to walk together in the ways of the Lord, made known and to be made known to us. We hold it to be the mission of the church to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in all the world, while worshiping God, and striving for truth, justice and peace. As did our ancestors, we depend on the Holy Spirit to lead and empower us. We pray for the coming of the kingdom of God, and we look with faith toward the triumph of righteousness and eternal life.**



What we value about living in our area (2 – 3 sentences):

We value Maui, Hawaii, for its natural resources that allow the church and its members to implement sustainable environmental programs.

We value Maui, Hawaii for its acceptance of diversity, especially as it refers to ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation.

We value Maui, Hawaii for the multi-cultural community, their contributions and volunteering of their special talents.

Current size of membership: 91

Languages used in ministry (*other than English*):

Position Title: Settled Pastor

Position Duration (*choose one, delete the other options listed*):

Settled – a called position intended for longer-term ministry in which the minister moves church membership to the congregation and moves standing to related association

Compensation Level (*choose one, delete the other options listed*):

Full Time

Does the total support package meet conference compensation guidelines? Yes

## **1b. SCOPE OF WORK**

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In addition to the Summary Ministry Description, above, (Page 3) - Pastor will interact in community displaying our presence as IAO United Church of Christ. He will support the Education and Tutoring Program, Homeless Program, Feeding the Poor, Elderly Services, Drug/Alcohol/Mental Health, and participate in grant selection and preparation to benefit church programs.

Core Competencies:

Caring, sensitive and compassionate across all our communities. Demonstrated qualities of caring, sensitivity, and compassion across all of our diverse communities. Able to communicate effectively both orally and in written form.



## 1c. COMPENSATION AND SUPPORT

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Salary Basis (*from the Call Agreement Workbook, equal to Cash Salary plus Value of Parsonage/Housing Allowance*): \$58,000.00

Benefits (*choose one*):

Salary plus Benefits

What is the expected living situation for your next minister?

Housing Allowance

Comment on the residential/commuting expectations for your next minister.

Very limited commute, less than an hour in any direction.

State any incentives (*e.g. school debt reduction or retention bonus after a certain number of years in position*): None.

Describe peer and professional supports available for ministers in your association/conference:

UCC Hawaii Conference, 'Aha O Nā Mokupuni 'O Maui, Moloka'i a Me Lāna'i, State of Hawaii Services.

If applicable, describe how your church will adopt part-time adjustments in the pastoral schedule to support a minister's bi-vocational employment: N/A

## 1d. WHO IS GOD CALLING TO MINISTER WITH US?

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Our next pastoral leader must be able to work with the church family to support programs such as the children's tutoring program and the church's homebound members and activities such as food distribution. These activities reflect our mission statement. Also, our next leader should connect with the community to assist with activities such as food distribution.

*Describe how your vision of the minister you are now seeking will assist the congregation in making an impact beyond its walls.*

Although not a requirement, it is critical to have sensitivity to work with our Micronesian community partners who are important members of our church family.

Their active involvement includes but are not limited to working on grounds projects, stewardship, food distribution, feeding the incarcerated, county fair preparation, bazaar, technical support, youth activities, participating in worship service, and in addition,

having their own Micronesian worship services where they're able to educate the larger community about their culture.

We sincerely hope and pray the new minister will continue the mission growing programs with which we are currently involved, as well as developing new relationships with community agencies and leaders, in an open and affirming manner.

*Specify language requirements or culturally-specific capacities preferred in a next ministerial leader, and why those matter to the congregation's sense of calling.*

Because of our diversity, the congregation speaks mostly English, but we encourage our next pastor to learn Hawaiian phrases as well as Micronesian (but not a requirement).

Based on what you have learned about who your church is, who your church's neighbor is, and who God is calling the church to become, describe four areas of excellence from *The Marks of Faithful & Effective Authorized Ministry* that your next minister will display to further equip the congregation's ministry in these areas.

*Please refer to Marks of Faithful and Effective Authorized Ministers in the United Church of Christ.*

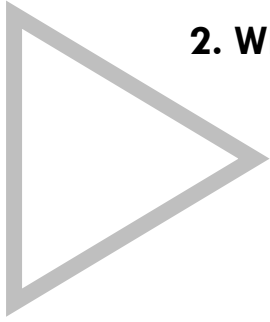
- 1) Exhibiting a spiritual foundation and ongoing spiritual practice.
- 2) Caring for All Creation.
- 3) Working Together for Justice and Mercy
- 4) Strengthening Inter-and Intra-Personal Assets.

#### Curriculum & Training Development

Innovation Center & Think Tank (brainstormed in established committees)

Strategic Organizational Alignment (committee run- finance, building & grounds, etc.)

- 1) Theologically, we have become a progressive church but still rooted in our cultural traditions. We do welcome those who are not as progressive, but our community outreach and mission statement call us to agree-to-disagree and still welcome ALL of God's children.
- 2) Community outreach and engagement is extremely important for our church. We would like our next pastor to keep the relationships strong with the community leaders.
- 3) Continue to engage our youth, young adults, in the life of the church. Youth events can be coordinated with the Micronesian Ministry of the church.
- 4) Maintain outreach to those who are homebound, elderly, sick, and need to be connected to the church.
- 5) Incorporate music as a tool of ministry.



## 2. WHO IS GOD CALLING US TO BECOME?

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37 NRSV)

*Who is God calling you to become as a congregation?*

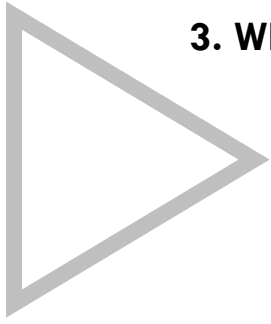
We are open and affirming of/for all people. No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.

God is calling our church members to be courageous in spreading the Good News, gathering and uniting people, reaching out in caring and compassionate ways to all in our community. Nurture the building of community partnerships, including other denominations.

Describe how God is calling you to reach out to address the emerging challenges and opportunities of your community and congregation.

*For example, describe two experiments your congregation has initiated or engaged in the past year, what were the results and where do you see your next steps? Has your church had a multi-year strategic plan or vision statement; if so, where do you see that plan/vision taking you?*

1. Food Distribution Program Ongoing  
Next Step: Create a plan to modify and improve the program efficiency.
2. Continue with our virtual presence for worship services. Ongoing  
Next Step: Implement leading edge technology and continue technological connections.



### 3. WHO ARE WE NOW?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

- a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS
- b. 11-YEAR REPORT
- c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS
- d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING
- e. CHURCH FINANCES
- f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### 3a. CONGREGATIONAL REFLECTIONS

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Describe your congregation’s life of faith.

*For example, what beliefs and commitments are stated in your congregation’s purpose statement or membership vows? How is God most often described in worship liturgy? In what ways would you describe the Holy Spirit in your midst?*

“We are a people of God, living and sharing the love of Christ and reflecting that love in word and actions”, is our mission statement we try to live out in the life of this church and or personal lives. We try as best we can to use inclusive language in worship when referring to “God”. As a ONA church, we are also committed to continue the building of partnerships with other denominations.

Describe several strengths or positive qualities of your congregation.

The congregation appreciates the intergenerational interracial/multicultural nature of the congregation and affirms our commitment to youth, immigrants, our denomination and being open and affirming. We like our flexibility, openness to one another in prayer and fellowship through Aloha Hour, snacks and conversation after the Sunday service. We believe being ONA means that ALL of God’s children will be welcomed and affirmed.

*Describe what worship is like when your congregation gathers.*

Our Sunday services are held in our historical sanctuary, Facebook live and our FM 88.1 radio station. Our lay readers are both youth and adults.

During Lent we held joint ecumenical services with the priest from St. Anthony’s Roman Catholic Church and other pastoral leaders from the community. This was a very positive event and well received by the members of all the congregations involved in this Wednesday’s Lent series.

- A) In continuing the tradition from our original church, Iao Congregational Church in 1988, we gather to honor those members who reach the golden years of 80 and 88. We have also included and celebrated those who are fortunate to become centurion.
- B) We believe we should provide support for members who are in care homes, homebound, elderly, with visits, phone calls, cards, prayers, singing and small gifts on special occasions.

A good sermon that speaks to all and is relevant to today's current events and social issues, always touches the hearts of the congregation. This is preached with God at the center of all messages with encouragement as well as sensitivity. A good sense of humor is always helpful and welcomed!

Describe the educational program/faith formation vision of your church.

*For example, how are young people in leadership? How do people continue to form their faith over a lifetime? Name a topic studied or curriculum used recently; what was the impact of this study on those who attended?*

We invite our youth to participate in Sunday services as readers. Monthly youth gatherings are held for socializing and preparing for youth Sundays where the youth lead the entire service on the 5<sup>th</sup> Sundays.

People continue to form their faith when that seed is planted as a child and flourishes through encouragement and involvement.

We participate with the UCC Hawaiian Conference and Associations when they offer worships via Zoom.

Describe how your congregation is organized for ministry and mission.

*For example, how are decisions communicated in your church? How are teams or committees organized? Where does your church struggle for vision?*

Decisions are communicated via monthly newsletter, Sunday announcements, emails and phone tree.

Communities and committees are on a voluntary basis as needed, through prayer and persistence and have a particular role to accomplish and carry our mission statement out in our community.

Our vision of growth does cause a struggle but our faith and encouragement of our members stays strong.

- When it comes to decision-making, how many hours are spent in meetings per month?

A monthly council meeting is held for approximately 2 hours duration.

- Think of a time when action had to be taken quickly, for example when a crisis or disaster occurred. How was that accomplished?

When an emergency occurs, messages are sent to the council via email and phone tree to expedite information, response, and decision making.

- Can you provide the next minister with a copy of an organization structure, bylaws and/or annual report to further explain the patterns of the church’s activity and governance? Yes.

### 3b. 11-YEAR REPORT See Attachment A

*(add here the 11-Year Report developed with the help of your conference staff, UCC Data Hub, and Mission Insite)*

### 3c. CONGREGATIONAL DEMOGRAPHICS

We are a multi-generational, multi-ethnic congregation that is committed to the acceptance of people with varying levels of need, including, but not limited to, educational, economic, and social acceptance.”

Describe those who participate in your church.

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Number of members:	91	Actual
Number of non-members:	10	Yes
Total of church participants:	50	Yes

Percentage of total participants who have been in the church:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
More than 10 years:	75%	Yes
Less than 10, more than 5 years:	25%	Yes
Less than 5 years:		

Number of total participants by age:

0-11	12-17	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	75+	<i>Are these numbers an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
2	8	0	5	6	5	15	35	30	Yes

Percentage of adults in various household types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Single adults under 35:	10%	Yes
Households with minors:	10%	Yes
Single adults age 35-65:	25%	Yes
Joint households with no minors:	15%	Yes
Single adults over 65:	40%	Yes

Education level of adult participants by percentage:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
High school:	19%	Yes
College:	23%	Yes
Graduate School:	25%	Yes
Specialty Training:	33%	Yes
Other (please specify):		

Percentage of adults in various employment types:

		<i>Is this number an estimate? (check if yes)</i>
Adults who are employed:	54%	Yes
Adults who are retired:	42%	Yes
Adults who are not fully employed:	4%	Yes

Describe the range of occupations of working adults in the congregation:

From sanitation workers to corporate managers and entrepreneurs.

Describe the mix of ethnic heritages in your congregation, and the overall racial make-up. Most UCC congregations tend to describe themselves as “diverse.” Yet, the vast majority of UCC congregations are mono-cultural. What does diversity mean in your context?

Asian, Caucasian, Hispanic, and Pacific Islanders.

Has your congregation recently had a conversation about welcoming diversity, or do you plan to hold one on the near future (perhaps using, for example, the Welcoming Diversity Inventory)? Please note the date. Comment after the exercise:

Our church’s plan is to introduce the “Welcoming Diversity Inventory” to the congregation.

### 3d. PARTICIPATION AND STAFFING

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Complete the following chart. Please leave blank any fields that are not applicable to your congregation.

Ways of Gathering	Estimated number of people involved in attendance	Who plans each of the listed gatherings? <i>(list any and all worship planners, such as various lay leaders, pastors, musicians, other staff)</i>
Adult Groups or Classes		
Baptisms <i>(number last year)</i>	0	
Children’s Groups or Classes	25	Learning Community
Christmas Eve and Easter Worship	50	Pastor
Church-wide Meals	50	(Prior to Pandemic) Stewarding
Choirs and Music Groups	6	(Prior to Pandemic) Worshipping Community
Church-based Bible Study	8	(Prior to Pandemic) Minister/Worshipping
Communion <i>(served how often?)</i>	50	(Monthly) Worshipping Community
Community Meals	70	Outreach Community
Confirmation <i>(number confirmed last year)</i>	0	Pastor
Drama or Dance Program	0	
Funerals <i>(number last year)</i>	4	Pastor/Funeral Community
Intergenerational Groups	50	Worshipping Community
Outdoor Worship	0	



Prayer or Meditation Groups	0	
Public Advocacy Work	5	
Retreats	0	
Theology or Bible Programs in the Community	0	
Weddings ( <i>number last year</i> )	0	
Worship (time slot: 9:30 am)	50	Pastor/Worshipping Community
Worship (time slot: _____)	N/A	
Young Adult Groups or Classes	15	Pastor/Learning Community
Youth Groups or Classes	20	Pastor/Learning Community
Support Group*	5	Pastor/4 Members 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tues. of ea mo.

Additional comments: \*Support Group visits members who are elderly, in care homes, homebound, and in hospital.

List all members or regular participants in your congregation who are ordained, licensed, or commissioned ministers. Indicate those with current United Church of Christ Three-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a congregation) or Four-Way Covenants (i.e. serving in a ministry beyond a congregation).

Name	Three- or Four-Way Covenant? (3 or 4 or No)	Ministry Setting	Type of Ministry Role	Retired? (Y or N)

If one or more previous pastors or retired ministers currently hold membership in the church, describe their role(s) in the life of the congregation:

List all current staff, including ministers. Exclude the position you are seeking to fill. Indicate which staff person serves as head of staff.

Staff Position	Head of Staff?	Compensation (full time, part time, volunteer)	Supervised by	Length of Tenure for current person in this position
Office Administrator	No	Part-Time	Council	New Hire

### REFLECTION

*Reflection: After reviewing the congregational demographics and activities above, what does this information reflect about your congregation’s overall ministry?*

As an Open and Affirming (ONA) church, we strive to accept diversity and to answer the call of our community’s needs. In order to do that, we need to grow our church community so that those tasks are not on the shoulders of a few.”

### 3e. CHURCH FINANCES

**SEE ATTACHMENT B FINAL BALANCE SHEET DATED DECEMBER 31, 2021**

Current annual income (dollars used during most recent fiscal year)

Source	Amount
Annual Offerings and Pledged Giving	\$
Endowment Proceeds ( <i>as permitted within spending policy, such as a cap of typically 4.5%-5% on total return</i> )	\$
Endowment Draw ( <i>beyond what is permitted by spending policy, “drawing down the principal”</i> )	\$
Fundraising Events	\$
Gifts Designated for a Specific Purpose	\$

Grants	\$
Rentals of Church Building	\$
Rentals of Church Parsonage	\$
Support from Related Organizations (e.g. Women's Group)	\$
Transfers from Special Accounts	\$
Other (specify):	\$
Other (specify):	\$
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$</b>

Current annual expenses (dollars budgeted for most recent fiscal year): \$

*Attach most recent church budget, spending plan, operating statement, or annual treasurer's report as shared publicly with the congregation, or – if your church does not pass an annual budget – list current budgeted expenses here.*

Considering total budgeted expenses for the year, compare total ministerial support. What is the percentage? Based on 2021 total budgeted expenses, the percentage of ministerial support was 14%.

Has the church ever failed to pay its financial obligations to a minister of the church? No.

Is your church 5-for-5, i.e. does it include each of the following contributions during the church year? (indicate those included during the most recent fiscal year). Yes.

- Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM – Basic Support)
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- Christmas Fund

In what way is OCWM (Basic Support) gathered? If calculated as a percentage of operating budget, what is that percentage? (recommended 10%)

Under current circumstances, we had to reduce our percentage, however, should circumstances and financial security improve, we intend to meet the recommended 10% contribution.

What is the church's current indebtedness?

Total amount of loan debt: \$117,840.31

Reason for debt: Built upper parking lot.

Are capital and other payments current? Yes.

Church's final balance sheet for 2021 and 2022 approved budget to be included in church profile. (Attachment B)

In the fall of 2020, there were some suspicions about our financial records and bank statements. In January of 2021, the Pastor at the time and the Church officers confronted an employee regarding missing funds from accounts and the employee was terminated. Thereafter, we had a forensic audit conducted and hired an accountant to handle the finances. The church's insurance covered some of our losses and new accounting processes and procedures have been put in place to help protect our church and the staff.

If a building program is projected or underway, describe it, including the projected start/end date of the building project and the total project budget.

If the church has had capital campaigns in the last ten years, describe:

**See Attachment C**

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
		\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

If a capital campaign is underway or anticipated, describe:

Year(s)	Purpose	Goal	Result	Impact
		\$	\$	
		\$	\$	

Describe the prominent mission component(s) involved in the most recent (or current) capital campaign.

Does your church have an endowment? Yes.

What is the market value of the assets? \$55,743.81

Are funds drawn as needed, regularly, or under certain circumstances?

What is the percentage rate of draw (last year, compared to 5 years ago)?

Describe draw on endowment, if any, to meet operating budget expenses for the most recent year and the past five years:

At the current rate of draw, how long might the endowment last?

Please comment on the above calculations or estimates:

#### Other Assets

Reserves (savings): \$

Investments (other than endowment): \$

Does your church have a parsonage? No

Fair market rental value of the parsonage:

How is the parsonage used?

Street / City / State / Zip:

Finished square footage:

Number of Bedrooms, Number of Bathrooms:

#### Assessed real estate value

Premises	Building Value	Contents Value
Main Church	\$2,055,964	\$121,301
Kanda Hall	\$ 545,621	\$ 25,148
Endo Hall	\$ 245,132	\$ 20,244
Storage	\$ 98,052	\$ 2,690
Watanabe Hall	\$ 547,202	\$ 39,538
Fujitomo Hall	\$ 482,360	\$ 79,074
Bell Tower	\$ 47,444	\$ -0

Describe all buildings owned by the church: Available for minister residence: N

Expected minister residence: Live within the community.

Condition of structure, systems and appliances.

Entity in the church responsible for review and needed repairs.

Sanctuary

Watanabe Hall

Endo Hall

Kanda Hall

Fujimoto Hall

Garage/Storage Bldg

Describe non-owned buildings or space used or rented by the church:

N/A

Which spaces are accessible to wheelchairs? (*Worship space, pulpit, fellowship space, facilities, etc.*)

Sanctuary\* and Kanda Hall

\*Pulpit area is not accessible.

Reflection: After reviewing the church's finances and assets described above, what does this information reflect about your congregation's mission and ministry?

*For example, when was a time the church made a major budget change? How is the budgeting process done? What new ministry initiative has your church financed?*

The Budgeting process is done by each Community and is reviewed and consolidated by the Finance Committee. Once approved by the Committee it is submitted to the Church Council for approval and then submitted to the congregation during the annual meeting for final approval.

New Ministry Initiatives:

- Online Presence
- Food Bank-Food Distribution
- Community Outreach

### 3f. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

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*Name one to three significant happenings in the history of your church that have shaped the identity of your congregation. Add the most important event in the life of your church in the past 10 years.*

Began joint services with specific churches of other denominations

2019 As the pandemic began, worked in conjunction with the Maui Food Bank to distribute food to those in need. As the pandemic continued, developed ways to connect with the members and non-members using technology

2018 Began active community outreach via pastor

2002 Became ONA church

Describe a specific change your church has managed in the recent past.

We have worked to become more transparent with members by sharing appropriate information and implementing more financial checks and balances, and updating financial procedures in the by-laws due to alleged financial improprieties

Every church has conflict, some minor, some larger. "Where two or three are gathered, there will be disagreement...."

Describe your congregation’s values and practices when it comes to conflict. Presently the church does not have a process to deal with internal congregational concerns, however, such policy is necessary and will be developed to address this. When there is a conflict with the pastor, Iao UCC will use the UCC Guidelines Manual on Ministry.” Any conflicts are handled on an ad hoc basis.

*For example, what is an example of a recent conflict and something your congregation learned from it? Describe an occasion when your church experienced conflict without being able to resolve it well. Does your church have policies, protocols or structures for dealing with conflict?)*

The church strives to use consensus as a means of decision-making to resolve issues.

Ministerial History (include all previous ministerial staff for the past 30 years)

Staff member’s name	Years of service	UCC Standing (Y/N)
Florentino (Tino) Cordova	5	Y
Jack Belsom	23	Y
Wally Ryan-Kuroiwa	2	Y

Comment on what your church has learned about itself and its relationship with persons who provided ministerial leadership: Under Pastor Belsom’s leadership, we became an open and affirming congregation in 2002.

Has any past leader left under pressure or by involuntary termination?

N

Has your church been involved in a Situational Support Consultation?

N

Has a past pastor been the subject of a Fitness Review while at your church?

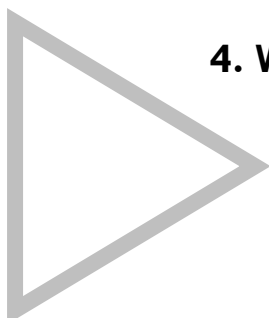
N

#### 4. WHO IS OUR NEIGHBOR?

“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39 NRSV)

a. COMMUNITY VISION

b. MISSION InSite



## 4a. COMMUNITY VISION

---

How do the relationships and activities of your congregation extend outward in service and advocacy?

*For example, which service activities has your church participated in this past year?*

Maui Pride, Food Bank, Cup of Cold Water, Kiwanis/Keiko Immunization Clinic

*Where has the church participated in global connections of care and justice?*

Global viewing of Sunday Worship services as a truly open and affirming church.

Special mission offerings reaching domestic and international needs.

One Hour of Sharing- carrying God's message of love and hope to people in crisis.

*What is currently transformational in your church's engagement with neighbors near or far?*

Global viewing of Sunday Worship services as a truly open and affirming church.

Sunday Worship services with its technological capacity has had a global impact.

Listeners include people from across the US as well as internationally. (ADD the data).

Describe your congregation's participation in meetings, relationships and activities connecting the wider United Church of Christ (association / conference / national setting).

Iao UCC has been an active member of the local, National, and international communities through such agencies as Habitat for Humanity, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, etc. (please see attached list of Community Agencies). We contribute to One Great Hour of Sharing to provide sources of clean water, food, education and health care, small business micro-credit, advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, and emergency relief and rehabilitation.

Many local churches love to tell the story of what they are doing in the community to transform lives. Some have identified certain aspects of their witness into the wider community using language shared with other UCC congregations. (Find more information as desired at [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).)

Check any statements below that apply to your UCC faith community.

Accessible to All (A2A)

Just Peace

Creation Justice

Global Mission Church

Economic Justice

Open and Affirming (ONA)

Faithful and Welcoming

WISE Congregation for Mental Health

God Is Still Speaking (GISS)

Other UCC designations:

Border and Immigrant Justice

Designations from other denominations

Inter-cultural/Multi-racial (I'M)

None



*Reflect on what the above statement(s) mean(s) to your community. Is your congregation interested in working toward any of the above statements of witness in the near future?*

We would be interested in exploring the possibility of becoming a “Welcoming, Inclusive, Supportive, Engaged” (WISE) Congregation for Mental Health.

*Describe your congregation’s participation in ecumenical and interfaith activities (with other denominations and religious groups, local and regional).*

Most recently hosted an ecumenical and interfaith Wednesday night service during Lent, which included the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Lutheran and other UCC ministers as speakers, inviting all congregational members.

*If your congregation has a mission statement, how does that mission statement compare to the actual time spent engaging in different activities? Think of the range of activities from time spent gathering, to governance, to time spent going out.*

Every time we sponsor or participate in any activity, worship, youth program, potlucks, county fair, community outreach, Pride and Fair Parades, we engage with our mission statement in mind “We are a people of God, living and sharing the love of Christ, and reflecting that love in word and actions.”

*Reflect on the scope of work assigned to your pastor(s). How is their community ministry and their ministry in and on behalf of the wider church accounted for in the congregation’s expectations on their time?*

As a primary focus, we expect our next pastor to support and be highly engaged in the church (family) community. Secondly, we expect our next pastor to engage with the mission statement in mind when building bridges with local agencies and leaders. When engaging with UCC Conference and Association leaders, to spend some time doing the vital community outreach to bring who we are as a church out into the community.

#### **4b. MISSION InSite**

---

Comment on your congregation’s Mission Insite report with data for your neighborhood(s) or area. What trends and opportunities are shown?

Many of the younger generation are moving off island due to cost of living. We need to engage in affordable housing by participating in discussion and efforts to move on this issue so that our local people can once again afford to stay on island.

How do your congregation's internal demographics compare or contrast to a) the neighborhoods adjacent to your church, and b) other neighborhoods with which your church connects?

Using data from the census or county of Maui regarding demographics in Wailuku.

As a church that has descendants from the original 1895 church, we have become a diverse congregation with Japanese, Chinese, Anglo and now Micronesian.

How are the demographics of the community currently shaping ministry, or not?

It is an 'all in' approach when it comes to understanding each other's cultures and expectations.

We often start our service with the UCC theme: "No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

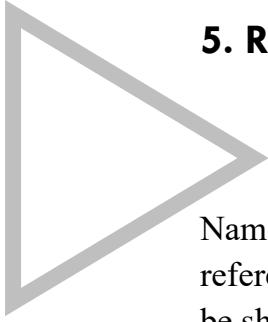
What do you hear when you talk to community leaders and ask them what your church is known for?

How welcoming this congregation is to everyone, how engaged we have been over the years with the community, and how courageous we are when it comes to standing up for what we believe in as people of God.

What do new people in the church say when asked what got them involved?

Flying the pride flag on our church sign, brought in many of the allies, who became members.

Many who have seen the church in action out in our community, have wanted to polity with the church and have become 'friends of the church'.



## 5. REFERENCES

Name up to three people who have agreed to serve as phone and written references. Advise the three references: “The contact information you provide may be shared publicly. Please use contact information that you feel comfortable giving to candidates so they can reach you with their questions.”

Make sure they are not members of your church but are persons who know your church well enough to be helpful to candidates seeking more information. Request a letter from each reference in answer to the four prompts below. Attach the letters (up to three) as desired.

### REFERENCE 1

Rev. Msgr. Terrance Watanabe  
St. Anthony Parish  
(808) 244-4190 ext 228  
twatanabe@rcchawaii.org  
Participant in Ecumenical Lenten Prayer Leaders

### REFERENCE 2

Rev. Dr. Roxanne WhiteLight DMin  
Ordained  
(360) 953-4963  
pastorroxanne20@gmail.com

### REFERENCE 3

Rev. Danette Kong (Retired)  
(808) 497-3644  
danetekong@gmail.com  
Church Reference

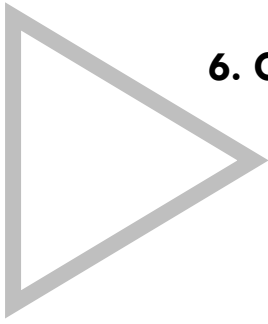
### PROMPTS FOR REFERENCES

Describe some areas of strength in this church’s ministry.

Describe some areas for improvement in this church’s ministry.

Describe a significant experience you have had of this church’s ministry.

Anything else you wish to share.



## 6. CLOSING THOUGHTS

- a. CLOSING PRAYER
- b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT
- c. CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION VALIDATION

### 6a. CLOSING PRAYER

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*Include here any prayer or dream for the minister you imagine journeying toward you... a poem, for example, or a Scripture passage or a piece of music that is meaningful to your Search Committee:*

Creator and Creating God, you know our innermost thoughts and worries. As we move into the search process for another Kahu, another Pastor, give us strength to be a pastor toward one another during this interim period.

We thank you for your steadfast presence and companionship. In times of constant and change you have always walked with us into the deeper waters of faith, calling us to be united for the sake of mission and ministry, and calling us out of ourselves to serve a world in need.

We pray for those pastors who are searching for a new call. May they be led by the Spirit to a faithful community that will love and trust in their vision, their call that you have given them.

As we move into this search process, help us to hold fast to the promise that your mission is bigger than any single pastor, local church, or conference. May that promise bring us comfort and discomfort as we move through a time of change that will mold us to become stronger in our faith.

Give us strength to be your Church in times of change where ALL will continue to be welcomed, loved, and truly affirmed for who they are and where they are on life's journey. In this time, help us to lead with courage, be not afraid to fail, and flip the page to the next chapter of our story. We offer this prayer in your many and Holy Names. Amen and Amene.

## 6b. STATEMENT OF CONSENT

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The covenantal relationship between a church and those called by that church to serve as pastors and teachers and in other ministerial positions is strengthened when vital information is openly shared by covenantal partners. To that end, we attest that, to the best of our abilities, we have provided information in this profile that accurately represents our church. We have not knowingly withheld any information that would be helpful to candidates.


As the committee charged with the responsibility for identifying and recommending suitable new minister for our church, we have been authorized to share the information herein with potential candidates. We understand that a candidate may wish to secure further knowledge, information, and opinions about our church. We encourage a candidate to do so, recognizing that an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for continuing and healthy relationships between calling bodies and persons seeking a ministry position.

1. Which individuals and groups in the church contributed to the contents of this Local Church Profile? *(for example, church council or consistory, transition team, etc.)*

Search Committee

Transition Committee

2. Additional comments for interpreting the profile:

Signed by:  \_\_\_\_\_  
Shannon Ribao, Moderator  
Iao United Church of Christ

5/26/2023  
Date

6c. VALIDATION BY CONFERENCE/ASSOCIATION

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The congregation is currently in good standing with the association / conference named.

Staff Comment:

Yes

To the best of my knowledge, ministerial history information is complete.

Staff Comment:

Yes

To the best of my knowledge, available church financial information is presented thoroughly.

Staff Comment:

Yes

My signature below attests to the above three items.

Signature:



Name / Title: Associative Conference Minister

Email: jroach@hcucc.org

Phone: 808.895.8710

Date: May 26, 2023

**Attachments:**

- A. 3b Year Report**
- B. Balance Sheet 2021**
- C. Building & Grounds Completed Projects**
- D. Watanabe Reference Letter**
- E. WhiteLight Reference Letter**
- F. Kong Reference Letter**

This document is created through support to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) and is only possible through the covenantal relationships of all settings of the United Church of Christ.

*"Jesus answered them, 'Have faith in God!'" – Mark 11:22*



**UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**ELEVEN YEAR CHURCH PROFILE BASED ON DATA REPORTED IN UCC YEARBOOKS**

Church#: 140680      Schedule: 0      lao United Church of Christ      Wailuku      HI      96793  
 Assoc: 192

YEAR	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	CONFIRMATION	CONFESSION	TRANSFER OR REAFFIRM	DEATHS OR TRANS OUT	OTHER LOSSES	NET MEMBS ADDS-REMOVED
2011	161	65	35	0	0	0	4	1	-5
2012	168	65	31	9	2	0	4	0	7
2013	182	65	20	4	3	9	2	0	14
2014	179	80	25	0	0	0	3	0	-3
2015	178	55	30	0	0	0	1	0	-1
2016	177	60	18	0	0	3	4	0	-1
2017	176	65	27	1	0	7	9	0	-1
2018	187	60	39	15	0	1	5	0	11
2019	178	60	4*	0	0	2	1*	0	9
2020	176	60	4*	0	0	1	2	1	-2
2021	98	60	30	0	0	0	7	71	-78

YEAR	CURRENT EXPENSES	CAPITAL PAYMENTS	BASIC SUPPORT	TOT OTHER UCC GIVING	TOTAL OCWM	OTHER GIFTS	WIDER MISSION	BASIC SUPPLY CURR LOCAL	TOTAL EXPEND	PLEDGES AND OFFERINGS
2011	\$202,162	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$3,961	\$13,961	\$4,320	\$18,281	4.95	\$232,443	\$125,642
2012	\$198,250	\$12,000	\$10,000	\$3,305	\$13,305	\$3,000	\$16,305	5.04	\$226,555	\$135,955
2013	\$174,200	\$0	\$10,000	\$2,502	\$12,502	\$0	\$12,502	5.74	\$186,702	\$145,450
2014	\$423,368	\$0	\$10,000	\$5,027	\$15,027	\$0	\$15,027	2.36	\$438,395	\$145,530
2015	\$436,510	\$0	\$10,000	\$4,862	\$14,862	\$0	\$14,862	2.29	\$451,372	\$131,592
2016	\$226,387	\$27,484	\$10,000	\$1,874	\$11,874	\$1,000	\$12,874	4.42	\$266,745	\$124,568
2017	\$193,901	\$58,864	\$10,000	\$4,051	\$14,051	\$2,670	\$16,721	5.16	\$210,622	\$122,724
2018	\$17,898	\$7,009	\$7,500	\$4,172	\$11,672	\$1,000	\$12,672	41.90	\$30,570	\$112,621
2019	\$216,300	\$6,662	\$8,000	\$4,373	\$12,373	\$1,000	\$13,373	3.70	\$229,673	\$111,659
2020	\$175,338	\$6,500	\$100	\$670	\$770	\$1,000	\$1,770	0.06	\$177,108	\$75,039
2021	\$153,349	\$0	\$2,000	\$4,400	\$6,400	\$1,000	\$7,400	1.30	\$160,749	\$66,975

% CHANGE	MEMBERS	AVG WEEKLY ATTENDANCE	CHR ED/ FAITH FORM	TOTAL ADDITIONS	TOTAL REMOVALS	CURR LOCAL EXPENSES	TOTAL OCWM	TOTAL EXPENDITURE
2016-2021	-44.63	0.00	66.67	-100.00	1850.00	-32.26	-46.10	-39.74
2011-2021	-39.13	-7.69	-14.29	0.00	1460.00	-24.15	-54.16	-30.84

Please note: Zero values ("0" or "\$0") may reflect missing information in some years. Christ an Education/Faith Formation refers to Church School Enrollment for all figures before 2007.



2:23 PM  
01/25/22  
Accrual Basis

IaoUCC's QuickBooks Data  
Balance Sheet  
As of December 31, 2021

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	<u>Dec 31, 21</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
BOH IAO PRESCHOOL CHECKING	48,026.15
BOH IAO PRESCHOOL SAVINGS ACCT	40,839.43
BOH IAO UCC ENDOWMENT SAVINGS	34,675.70
BOH Lillian Maeda Checking	4,568.96
First Hawaiian Checking	358.05
IFCU CHECKING	37,109.44
IFCU SAVINGS	<u>18,371.05</u>
Total Checking/Savings	<u>183,948.78</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>183,948.78</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u><u>183,948.78</u></u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	31,603.09
Retained Earnings	-1,709.52
Net Income	<u>154,055.21</u>
Total Equity	<u>183,948.78</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u><u>183,948.78</u></u></b>

B & G Completed Project List

9/16/2022

2000 to 2020 Maui County Fair Booth Setup and Breakdown then in 2019 No Fair Due to COVID-19
2008 Upper Parking Lot, Drainage, Steps, Concrete Wall Project
2009 Paint Kanda Hall and Fujitomo Hall Exterior
2010 Main St. Rock Wall Improvement Funded by County
2011 Installed irrigation lines and timer.
2012 Sanctuary Patched damaged ceiling, refurbished pews, repaired windows, bathroom floor and toilet.
2013 PV Installation by Rising Sun Solar
2014 Kanda and Fujitomo Hall Fluorescent Light Fixture Replacement Project
2015 IPS Jalousie frame replacement, Installed A/C Fujitomo Hall, Steeple and Window Project
2016 Bell Tower Painted, IPS Painted Exterior, Kanda Hall Repair and Paint Handrail ramp, Iao Parsonage performed major repairs, painted interior, exterior, landscaping and trimmed trees.
2017 Sanctuary Stain Glass repairs.
2018 Kanda Hall Kitchen and Bathroom Renovation, installed carpet and VTC flooring, electrical upgrade, installed new Iao UCC signage.
2019 Kanda Hall Installed water heater and new copper lines, Sanctuary Replaced Sound System, Renovated Endo Hall Storage Building.
2020 Sanctuary Installed video camera, projector and ran cables for Virtual Service, IPS replace fluorescent light fixtures and bulbs ; Restriped Lower and Upper Parking Lot Stalls.
2021 Kanda Hall poured cement patio slab, Fujitomo Hall floor and bathroom renovation, IPS hand wash station repair project, removed and replace main waterlines to all buildings, replaced and installed new door locks and reassigned keys to individuals.
2022 Endo Hall Paint Exterior Walls and Trim, Installed water heater, valve and copper pipes, replaced toilet and wood rot floor.
<b>Future Projects:</b> Sanctuary Front Door, Roof Replacement for IPS, Select and install Security Cameras, Kanda and Fujitomo Hall, Fumigate all buildings, Repave Lower Parking Lot, Fujitomo Hall Install Handicap Ramp, Install Lights in Lower Parking Lot, Sanctuary Patio Expansion.



## ST. ANTHONY CHURCH & SCHOOL

1627 Mill Street, Wailuku, Hawaii 96793 • (808) 244-4148 • info@stanthonymaui.org

### OFFICE OF THE PASTOR

Mr. & Mrs. James Robinson  
c/o Lao United Church of Christ  
2371 Vineyard Street  
Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii 96793

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Robinson,

Thank you for this opportunity to share with you some of my insights into Lao United Church of Christ as you prepare to select your new Pastor for your wonderful congregation. I am so honored and humbled by your invitations to participate with you in this very important endeavour of selecting your new Pastoral Leader especially after the wonderful one who has just left us, Rev. Florentino Cardova. I will do my best to answer the questions that you have given to me.

**1. Describe some areas of strength in Lao UCC's Ministry**

I believe that the strongest area of strength that you all possess is that of social justice that translates into a wonderful welcoming spirit and a willingness to put the Gospel of Jesus Christ into action for others. I have witnessed the many ways you have welcomed everyone into your community of faith including the Micronesians, members of our gay community, and all of us who are of different faiths. Each time I am on your campus that spirit of welcome and hospitality is very tangible. I have also seen how hard all of you have worked on acquiring the food that you distributed to our community during difficult times as we all went through Covid. You did not do this once, but you did it time and time again as you continued to reach out to those in need. Know that I was deeply moved by your actions, and it was a great witness to the rest of us.

**2. Describe some areas for improvement in Lao UCC's Ministry.**

I am not aware of any areas that need improvement since I have not been around long enough (I have only been in Wailuku for the past 14 months) to be able to have observed areas for improvement. However, like all parish/congregations, I am sure that it is usually the same people that are doing everything. There is always a need to reach out and expand to bring others into the fold and to share the work of the Lord together. Another area that might be of concern would be how are we evangelizing the young people of our communities here on Maui. How are we reaching out to them and inviting them to come get to know the Lord and His Word. I know that at St. Anthony our community is aging and how are we passing on the faith and our relationship with the Lord to the younger people of our parish.



HOSPITALITY ✦ PRAYER ✦ FORMATION ✦ SERVICE



**3. Describe a significant experience you have had with Lao UCC Ministry.**

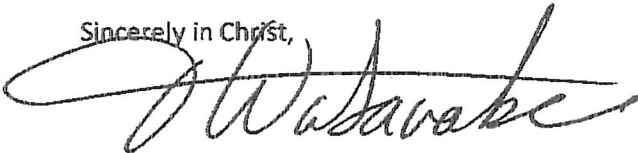
The significant ministry that I would reflect on is the way in which we are able to work together for the Lord. It warms my heart when we pray together and give praise to God with one another. I appreciate the times that we get together in our various churches to pray and to support one another on our journey of faith to God's Kingdom. I am so grateful for your ecumenical spirit at Lao UCC. We give great witness to the rest of the world when we are able to pray together in unity in the Lord.

**4. Anything else you wish to share.**

I pray that you find the right person for your Congregation who will be able to bring the Lord to people of all ages. Someone who will love your parish community deeply and be able to reach out to others and welcome them in. I pray that they will feel as welcome and at home as I do when I am on your campus. If they are from the Mainland, I hope that they will be open to the host culture of our Islands and are willing to be flexible and adapt to the lifestyle that we love and cherish. I know that your Spirit of Aloha will certainly embrace you new Pastor and fill him/her with that same Spirit. Be assured of our thoughts and prayers for all of you as you go through this process and know that we are just down the street if you need any help or support. Again, mahalo for the life and love of the Lord that you continue to share with our Maui Community. Wishing you all the best in Jesus' name. Amen.

With warm personal regards, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Watanabe', written in a cursive style.

(Rev. Msgr.) Terrence A. M. Watanabe  
Pastor

October 20, 2022

Suzette Robinson  
Iao United Church of Christ  
Search Committee Member

### Letter of reference for IAO United Church of Christ Search Process

It is my pleasure to offer my reflection about the congregation that brings Iao UCC to life. They are an extremely committed and service-oriented congregation that is rooted in spiritual devotion.

I have served Iao UCC as a pulpit supply pastor since 2020. I also have co-  
led services with their former pastor, especially during the seasons of  
advent and lent.

There are three specific areas of strength that I would like to highlight,  
from among their many strengths:

- 1) Commitment to social justice. In March of 2020, when the pandemic lock-down was just beginning here in Maui, we experienced an immediate, almost 35% unemployment situation. The hotels and resorts that are our largest employers were completely closed. Iao saw the immediate food crisis that would unfold and began to operate a thriving food pantry. Unlike many other services offering food, the volunteers from Iao delivered food to those who simply called the office. This ministry continues to this day. They were also very committed to the health of their members, as demonstrated by the clear, specific changes they made around pandemic safety. Unlike many other churches, they continued to have "virtual only" services until it was safe for the community to gather again.
- 2) Ownership of the church and its mission. This is a church of people who are committed to their community. Unlike some churches where you only see people at the church on Sundays. I frequently pass by the parking lot of the church is on my way to do my errands. There are cars of members of the church several days a week. When I enter the office, there are several volunteers there working on different ministry projects. The feel when you enter the office is

warm inviting. Youth are part of the working of the church, and their presence is appreciated by the congregation.

- 3) Willingness to embrace change. None of the congregations that I served enjoyed the technological challenges the pandemic brought. Iao stands out among these congregations as one that embraced changes, secured grants, experimented with the sanctuary and many other things to ensure that the best possible worship experience could be had, in spite of the limitations.

I would not specifically feel qualified to write about areas for improvement. I can site a few things I consider opportunities that the congregation might have.

- 1) One opportunity that they share with every other mainline protestant church is the invitation for people to return to in person worship in larger numbers. The pandemic created challenges for everyone, and especially the church. I believe that creativity will be the most required asset for churches that thrive in the future. Rather than just looking at what churches have done in the past, proactively seeking to understand what our neighbors are really needing to find meaning and purpose in their lives, and how the Good News of Christ might help them feel more fulfilled.
- 2) Continuing to expand their sense of welcome to all. Iao is the only formally "open and affirming" church in the UCC on our island. They have the opportunity to continue to lead the way in Christ's message of inclusion. They also demonstrate this commitment is the outreach to the Micronesian Communities that are part of Iao.

I have had many personal experiences at Iao that I have found to be meaningful. The one I would comment on here is their willingness to continue to offer the Blue Christmas Service. The form of this service is the acknowledgement that not everything is "merry and bright" for everyone during the Christmas season. The church has given me a space to mourn and reflect on the loss that is part of life. Especially when thousands of people were dying daily from Covid 19, the holiday season of 2020 was

very difficult. By participating in the Blue Christmas Service, I felt that I had a place that I could bring all of my mixed experiences of the season to the altar and be part of a community doing the same thing.

In closing, I deeply commend the people of Iao UCC Church to you. There is a presence at the church that I can only describe as sweetness that is evident when you are among its members. These are challenging times for the larger "church" and Iao has all of the "raw" materials, people, and faith to move forward into a new chapter of ministry for the Wailuku community of Maui.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Rev. Roxanne W WhiteLight, DMin

Aloha. I feel privileged and grateful to write this letter, sharing my thoughts about `Iao Congregational UCC Church in Wailuku, Maui.

I write this as someone who is not a member of this church, but who has had multiple interactions with its staff and diverse membership, observed its ministry toward the wider Maui community, and preached in several of its worship services.

This congregation is not your average embodiment of a group brought together to follow the example of Christ. Its membership's commitment, creativity and enthusiasm inspire other churches and Christians to do and be more, courageously and lovingly.

I have often wondered how a congregation like `Iao is developed and nurtured. I marvel that its members continue to provide dynamic worship and ministry. They are a "standout" congregation while being pastorless, and during a time when all churches are currently struggling with the impact of the CoVid pandemic and political divisions within our country.

Perhaps it has something to do with the origins of this church as a congregation for Japanese plantation workers in the late 1800s. Perhaps it has to do with the influence of Asian heritage and traditions within the multi-cultural setting of Hawai`i. Perhaps it has to do with the discrimination, even internment, experienced by Japanese-Americans during World War II. These people, who have known the pain of being ostracized or of being treated as "the Other," have a unique perspective, leaning on God as their source of Strength. They have persevered through personal and collective obstacles in life. They are a congregation which refuses to demean or overlook those who are too often relegated to the outskirts of society. They live their faith by literally welcoming and ministering to ALL: the hungry, immigrants, members of the LGBTQ community, and more.

The church has also wisely chosen ministers to shepherd them through its role as an outpost of Christ's Light. I have been privileged to observe and learn from the leadership of pastors Jack Belsom and Tino Cordova. These two men modeled a deep love and commitment for their congregation. They educated and mentored their "flock" to be the leaders we see today. The congregation actively LIVES out its faith. The church works hard (in a large, consistent, and well-coordinated effort) to provide food for the hungry, tutoring and support for school students (largely immigrants) in an after-school program, an on-site preschool, active and visible support for members of the LGBTQ community, meaningful connection for the elderly, vaccination outreach to immigrant communities, etc. It makes its facilities available to a number of denominational and service groups within the Maui community. I am sure there is much more that I am not aware of and have not listed.

One of my strongest memories involves the leadership of Pastor Tino when anti-LGBTQ activists showed up. I was present the day these screaming protestors bombarded anyone within listening distance with bullhorn declarations. They accosted members and their young children with ugly messages on Sunday mornings before worship. Pastor Tino modeled a calm, firm, and gracious response by handing out bottled water to the demonstrators.



Of particular note is how church leadership was able to uncover and repair damage inflicted when a trusted staff member created major legal and financial problems. My knowledge of the situation is limited, but I saw a united, compassionate front which maintained confidentiality and somehow addressed the issue as a matter of justice, rather than retribution. That'll preach! This also highlights a concern for this congregation, because I know that their loving approach to ministry leaves them vulnerable to being taken advantage of. My sense is that this experience has brought them to creating an effective system of checks and balances to prevent such a nightmare from reoccurring.

Another concern I have for this congregation is that the unique and inspiring voices of their *kūpuna* (elders) are gradually disappearing. This church does a beautiful job of celebrating their elderly. I hope they are also making a concerted effort to make recorded and printed interviews of these individuals so that future generations can continue to be inspired. Such a project can help ensure the significant contributions of these leaders and the memories of `Iao's heritage will not be forgotten. I am gratified to observe that the church has always been encouraging of its youth and diverse membership, and draws hope for future leadership from those who are being mentored in the present.

This church's lasting and remarkable legacy speaks to Christians far beyond the borders of Wailuku, Hawai'i. It is a privilege to know, and to continually be inspired by this congregation.

With gratitude and prayerful Hope for this congregation –

(The Rev.) Danette Kong, Kula, Maui