

Day Four Report

By Eric Anderson

Pastor Glenn Frazier, who works with both Church of the Pacific and Hanapepe Hawaiian Congregational Church on Kauai, hasn't been to a General Synod in a while. His experiences at this one have him thinking, somewhat nostalgically, that he'll be sorry not to attend another one. That despite the rapid pace of Monday's work, which found delegates considering most of the proposed resolutions along with changes to the bylaws.

He praised the authors of the resolution "The Earth is the Lord's – Not Ours to Wreck", which summons the church to continuous witness against the practices that further ocean warming, carbon transfer to the atmosphere, and climate change. He was very glad to see Love for Creation included in the UCC's "Three Great Loves" ministry campaign. One speaker, recalled Pastor Frazier, told their working group that "We like to think that governments are responsible, but it's really the local people who decide what's sustainable and what's to be protected."

"We live," Frazier said, "in the best experimental climate one could imagine. If we could discern responsible creation stewardship, we could be a model. The Hawai'i Conference could lead."

Of the Three Great Loves, he sees the Love of Children as requiring the most creative work because of the declining enrollment in church schools. The children we need to love are those around us. "How do we remove the barriers between us and the children in our community?" he asked. Children will also be among our Neighbors, the third of the Three Great Loves.

Frazier and the rest of the Synod delegates forged through a great deal of business on Monday. The bylaws revisions should allow the UCC to create senior leadership positions in response to emerging needs and concerns. They approved the resolution on climate change, and called for cultural sensitivity training for authorized ministers, and for support for clergy from under-represented groups. They urged federal funding for research into the causes and responses to gun violence. They narrowly rejected one supporting medical aid in dying, and another calling for adoptees to have access to their original birth certificates.

When the meeting was not in session, they took to the streets to protest federal immigration policy. And, of course, they worshiped.

At the opening session on Tuesday, Hawai'i's delegation gathered at the microphone to give voice to their love and best wishes for the Rev. Charles Buck, as his last day of service as Hawai'i Conference Minister began. Council Chair the Rev. Iese Tuuao introduced the delegation, and then the hall echoed with the music of Hawaiian chant. Pualani Muraki and Kahu Ken Makuakane lifted their voices in love, in blessing, and in tribute to God and the ministry of Christ.

General Synod concludes today, having completed all of its business. The 32nd General Synod of the United Church of Christ will be held in 2019 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

As for Pastor Frazier, he is determined that the UCC should cease to be the best kept secret in Hawai'i. He looks forward to working together "in our family of churches, nurturing the UCC name and witness."

The Rev. Eric Anderson is pastor of Church of the Holy Cross UCC in Hilo, Hawai'i.