HAWAI'I

America's strategic mission location: every tongue, nation and people group

A report to our partners in prayer and support Fall 2008

Updates & News
An update on events and needs in Hawai'i. We so appreciate your prayers, encouragement and financial support as we attempt great things for a great God!
Page 2

A Mile of Dimes
Our fundraiser for our community charity, Island Heart
Page 2



Appreciation from Amy
Our Overseer's wife was surrounded by love and concern when she was faced with emergency surgery in Nashville during the International Assembly.
Page 2

Island Heart
Becoming Jesus with skin on to the community around us.
Page 2

Is Hawaii a Mission?
Sun, sand, surf... how can America's paradise vacation destination possibly be considered a mission field?
Page 3

Join us on uStream
Our Sunday services are streamed live each week, and people from all over are watching! You're invited to log on and check us out.
Page 4

Phil'in out the staff

"I'm so excited I can hardly wait to get there and get involved. My heart is for the homeless, abandoned and abused." — Phil Pierce

In December of 2008 J. Phillip Pierce will relocate from Alabama to Hawai'i, joining the ministry team of the REUNION Sunday services and assisting the Overseer with administrative and operational leadership.

Phil has deep roots in the Church of God of Prophecy, but in recent years has served as an Ordained Church of God Bishop. Through a close working relationship with the Hawaii Church of God Administrative Bishop, Johnny House, Phil will retain his Church of God ministry credentials while working under the auspices and direction of Hawaii COGOP.

In addition to his experience as a Youth Director, Pastor, and Executive Pastor, Pierce is an accomplished musician, with more than three hundred songs published by Integrity Music.



Phil Pierce to join the ministry team of HAWAII COGOP in December of 2008

Job description?

Because he is multi-talented and broadly experienced, writing a job description for Phil is not easy. We are awaiting his arrival, praying in agreement together, and allowing the Lord to lead us in how to integrate Phil into the team. We know he will have some role in worship, will do some teaching/preaching, and will take the lead in the operation and business aspects of the church.

A Step of Faith

Hawai'i COGOP has no funds to offer Phil a salary; he is coming at his own expense, as a step of faith. Several individuals and local churches on the U.S. mainland have expressed support for Phil's mission and we hope that develops into enough financial support to enable him to live without seeking secular employment.

If you, or your local church, feel impressed to aid Phil with his transition, or offer ongoing support as he comes alongside the leadership in Hawai'i, contact the Overseer, Gary Langley at:

overseer@hawaiicogop.org or call **Phil Pierce** at **205.381.9826**

Appreciation from Amy

It was the first night of the International Assembly. Amy and I were at the Renaissance Nashville. In the wee hours of August 13 Amy was rushed to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in severe pain... her appendix ruptured and was removed and 12" of her colon was resected as the result of damage. She later developed pneumonia and pleurisy as complications and spent a second week in a hospital in Alabama.

During her recovery at Vanderbilt we were the recipients of an outpouring of love. Bishop Scott Creasy (Florida), Pastor Ron Hamm (Cedar Ridge Church – Metro Nashville), Jeff Jones (Youth Pastor from Tennessee), the Assembly Children's Ministry team, the Casey's from Australia, the Womens' Ministry from Brecksville, Ohio and others visited, sent cards, flowers and gifts.

The Overseer of Tennessee, Dr. E.C. McKinley visited and the General Overseer Emeritius, Fred Fisher and his wife Betty visited and prayed for Amy. The wife and sister of the present General Overseer (Bess Howard and Kathy Creasy) visited and cared for Amy for hours. Our Asia/Oceania General Presbyter, David Browder came, prayed and brought a love offering from Asia/.

Average people from places I have never been stopped me in the halls and lobbies of the Assembly to tell me they were praying for Amy, and asking about her progress. Leaders from nations I can't pronounce stopped to tell me they were praying. Two churches in Alabama invited me to preach and gave wonderful offerings. Friends and family in Alabama went above and beyond the call.

Amy has asked me to express her deep gratitude to each one who came, called, wrote, emailed, texted, sent flowers or gifts, or prayed!



Gary Langley

Overseer of Hawai'i

Our community charity

Island Heart was established as a charitable outreach ministry with seed funding donated by the family of the late Bishop Gary Holcombe, to honor the memory of a great man who served as a missionary, administrator, pastor and prison chaplain.

Since its inception Island Heart has been a source of blessing in our community. Even before it had an official name it was actively working for the betterment of the lives of people on the Island of O'ahu; weekly meals for the residents of a family homeless shelter and a catered Christmas Party complete with entertainment and gifts for every child and teen; distribution of new underwear to the residents of a homeless veterans' shelter; assisting a female inmate being released from prison with the needed funds to secure an apartment so she could get her six children out of foster homes and reunite her family for a fresh start.

With the recent economic downturns all charitable organizations that depend upon donations for survival have suffered; the shelves of the Hawai'i Food Bank are often empty, and Island Heart struggles to meet the many needs. Want to help? See the ***Mile of Dimes*** article below.

A Mile of Dimes?

*At 16 dimes edge-to-edge per foot, times 5,280 feet in a mile, we have a goal of $**8,448**.00*

In an attempt to find a creative approach to raising funds, we challenged our kids in Childrens' Ministry to collect as many dimes as they could before Thanksgiving Week. Many of them took an empty water bottle and started asking aunties and uncles, mom and dad to empty the change from pockets and purses.



Some of them have really captured the excitement of the competition, and we hear they are rapidly filling the bottles.

The child who raises the most funds will receive a very nice prize the Sunday after Thanksgiving, but the fundraising won't stop then; the needs are so great, and the funds so scarce, that we must continue to come up with new, creative ways to secure funds.

If you'd like to contribute to Island Heart, you can contribute through Windward Worship Center, which administers the funds.

Updates & News

Thanks for asking...



In our last newsletter we reported storm damage to some of our facilities, including the very visible cross atop Windward Worship Center. While doing some yard work, Pastor Gary was approached by a neighbor who remarked that he noticed the damage, and volunteered to see that it was repaired. About a week later, the Pastor heard noise on the roof, and discovered a couple of workmen making the repairs.



We are thankful to the Lord for sending that good neighbor and his workmen along to bless the church and community.

The **Praise & Worship Band** from REUNION Hawaii has become a great outreach tool. On a recent Friday night, when they normally schedule weekly rehearsals, they went instead to do a worship concert at the **Onemalu Transitional Family Shelter** at Kalaeloa. The residents of the Onemalu shelter are largely the working poor who have simply found themselves priced out of the extremely high rental market in Hawaii, and our churches have a history of ministry partnership with the staff and families there.

Ministering to the Marines (soldiers, sailors, airmen...) is part of our mission. We seek out military people away from home and include them in the life of the church, regardless of their struggles or their past spiritual experience. At major holidays, like Thanksgiving, we make sure they are included in family gatherings for a touch of home.

With many of them facing deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan in their immediate future, or having just returned from deployment dealing with the difficult adjustment of reentry, these are critical moments in their lives. Many of them turn their hearts to God in Hawaii and get involved in ministry. We praise God that we have prayed over many men and women leaving for deployment, and every one has returned safely. If you know of anyone stationed the military in Hawaii, let us know.





Hawaii? A mission? Really? How so?

Isn't Hawai'i just another of the 50 United States? How can it be a mission field?

Location

Hawaii is the most geographically isolated island chain on the face of the earth, separated from the U.S. mainland by 2,000 miles of Pacific Ocean. Because it is such a small place in the middle of the ocean, and is the point of entry for most Asian and Pacific Islanders entering the United States, Hawaii is a strategic location.

It is strategic for the U.S. Military forces. While Pearl Harbor might be America's most well-known military base, Hawaii is home to every branch: Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard. Many of the almost 46,000 service men and women are young and far away from home for the first time. Some are facing imminent deployment to a combat zone, or have just returned from deployment. There is a need to evangelize these young people, and many open doors to reconnect those who have dropped out of church attendance upon enlistment.

Hawaii is also a strategic mission due to the diverse international population. The population includes Japanese, Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Micronesian, Filipino, Chinese, Korean, Portuguese, African-American, European and Hispanic many more nationalities and ethnicities. There are few places on earth with greater opportunities to impact the nations in a small place. Almost all of the people groups in the islands have close connections to friends and family in their native countries. When we reach them with the gospel in Hawaii, they are able, in turn, to reach their friends and families back home in their native languages.

Hawaii is the embodiment of Matthew 9:37-38 *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

Culture

In Hawaii's agricultural past, workers from all over Asia and the Pacific Islands were imported as laborers in the sugar cane and pineapple fields. They came in waves of immigration: Japanese, Chinese, Filipino, Portuguese and Puerto-Ricans among others. As they learned to work together, communicate and build a new life in the islands, a unique culture was born.

With almost 40% of the population of Asian heritage, and 16% Polynesian, the culture in the islands is more closely akin to those regions than to America in many ways. Visitors to the islands find it an exotic destination without the disadvantages of international travel: no passport or currency exchange necessary.

That unique Asian-Pacific culture has many beautiful aspects, but it comes with a high price. Christianity is a minority religion, with less than 30% of the population claiming any kind of Christian faith, including the many Roman Catholics in Hawaii. The great irony in that statistic is that prior to the agricultural immigration, in the mid 1850's Hawaii was the site of a great spiritual revival, and over 97% of the residents of the islands were born-again believers, making it the most Christian nation on earth at that time!

From 97% Christian to less than 30% in a century and a half is exactly the opposite of the pattern of world evangelization we all believe in, and the followers of Jesus in Hawaii long for, and pray for Hawaii to once again be the most Christian place on earth.

We need the prayers, resources and cooperation of believers like you to see that goal realized.

Trouble in paradise

It's not all sun, sand and surf in the islands; there are real people, living real lives, with real problems among us.

We have all seen the movies and TV shows filmed in Hawaii, usually showing the beauty and glamorous side of 'paradise.' For many of the residents of these islands, however, real life is far from the glamour of a Waikiki penthouse.

There are an estimated 6,000+ homeless in a state of 1.3 million people... some in shelters, some under a tarp at a beach park, and some living in cars and vans. Because of the extremely high cost-of-living in the islands, a high percentage of the homeless are the working poor, leaving their make-shift living conditions to go to work daily.

Like everywhere else, Hawaii has a horrific drug problem. Crystal Meth and other drugs are pandemic, and are destroying thousands of individuals and families. Beneath the P.R. facade of the vacation paradise there are all the problems faced by every city and nation; rampant crime, poverty, homelessness, addiction, and hopelessness.

One encouraging statistic: the church is taking back territory the enemy has stolen. A recent survey disclosed that Hawaii was *the only state in the U.S. in which church attendance rates outpaced population growth*. It is a sign of hope and progress. We want to be aware of what God is doing and get aboard the wave of His Spirit as it moves.

Is Hawaii really a mission field? In every sense of the word! We need more called, committed and dedicated missionaries to come alongside of the church in Hawaii and help us declare that Jesus is Lord of these islands.

The tech connection: weekly live streaming services from Hawaii.

Are you interested in seeing the faces and hearing the voices of your brothers and sisters in the islands? Each Sunday at 10:00 AM Hawaii time there is a live video webcast from REUNION Church in Hawaii. We'd love to have you join us soon!*

(Hawaii Standard Time is GMT -10, so we are live at 3:00 PM Eastern - GMT-5/2:00 PM Central - GMT-6)







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