

FALL
2015

Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

STORY FOR ALL AGES



INTERFAITH 'OHANA: A HAWAIIAN STORY

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Partners
Reach Out
with Respect

One Sunday in January 2012, in the sanctuary, the First Unitarian Church of Honolulu shared worship with Kanenuiakea, an indigenous Hawaiian religious community. Few in the UU congregation had ever before witnessed chanting and dance in celebration of Kane (KAH-nay), the Hawaiian god of the sun, daylight, and Creation.

The service was also a first for Kanenuiakea. The religion, though hundreds of years old, has been practiced entirely in secret since the Hawaiian Kingdom and its Constitution were overthrown in 1893. And, Kane is traditionally honored out of doors, at sacred sites called *heiau* (HAY-ow)—never indoors, not for 120 years.

“Quickly we recognized a kindred people,” recalls Steve Lohse, a lifelong Unitarian, who led the congregation’s Social Justice Council to invite the indigenous group. “Their religion has principles and values that resonate with UU Principles.” For example, *aloha* means a way of life in harmony and balance, treating ourselves and others with love, respect, trust, and support. ‘*Ohana* means family. It is about our interconnectedness with everyone and



Kumu Glen Kila, of the Kanenuiakea community, leads UUs and indigenous Hawaiians along Oahu’s west coast to visit a sacred site.

everything in the universe through cooperation and the sharing of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next.

After that Sunday, the door swung open. Kanenuiakea leaders helped write a curriculum to teach UU children about traditional

Hawaiian values. Kanenuiakea also invited the UUs on hikes to heiau in the Waianae mountains; together, they cleaned the grounds, watered plants, and shared worship rituals and food.

Long ago, the Waianae volcanic mountain range and its surrounding ocean supported Kanenuiakea ancestors who farmed and fished for their livelihood. But indigenous Hawaiians suffered as American settlers took over the land, diverted water for their own use, and suppressed Native Hawaiian

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The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs.

www.uua.org/tapestryoffaith

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culture, language, and religion. The UU congregation came to understand that, for Kanenuiakea, the public worship in their sanctuary had been a brave act of trust.

Still, today, business and government make demands on the land. For example, the University of Hawaii wants to add a large telescope to the observatory atop Mauna Kea, the tallest mountain in Hawaii and considered especially sacred. Many Native Hawaiians oppose this. Some UUs have worked with Kanenuiakea to record oral histories about traditional use of the land, document sacred sites with GPS equipment, and register the sites with government agencies that can protect them. By the time Glen Kila, the *kumu* (ancestral leader) of Kanenuiakea, approached the Unitarian Universalists for support, the trust and respect of a good partnership were already in place. Leaders of the two communities shared ideas for what the congregation could do.

As a result, in April, UU minister Jonipher Kwong and Susan Lebo, a congregational leader who is currently the chief archaeologist for the State of Hawaii, wrote to Hawaii's governor about Mauna Kea. The letter respectfully offered an approach rather than demanding an action:

Because we affirm and promote justice, equity, and compassion in human relations and the inherent worth and dignity of every person ... we are concerned that various communities do not feel equitably represented over Mauna Kea, and we offer... [a] plea for leadership and healing.

Shortly afterward, Hawaii's governor announced a new plan for both sides to be heard: an example of the power we can find in interfaith witness . . . and partnership.

EXPLORING TOGETHER

Partners listen to one another's needs and concerns, then set a common goal together. They are honest about how they can help one another, and they follow through on their promises. They make use of the ways they are alike as well as the ways they differ. Our Unitarian Universalist Principles provide good guidance for successful, respectful partnerships with people who share our faith or culture as well as people from another faith or culture, around the corner or around the globe.



Meet, Share, and Work Together

Would you rather exchange letters in the mail? Meet by video conferencing? Or raise funds to visit or host a new friend in person? There are many safe ways to partner with someone your age in another community or country. You will learn about your part in the world's great diversity and understand that we all live under the same sky. Together, you may come up with wonderful ideas for making the world a better place.

If your UU congregation has a partner church in India, Transylvania, or the Philippines, you may meet young people willing to tell you about their beliefs, their everyday lives, their challenges, and their dreams. They will be interested in yours, too.

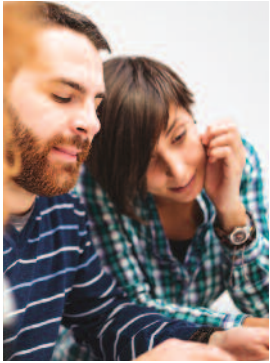
Do Not Assume...

...anything! For example, you might expect your new partner to speak English, but maybe they don't. Expect surprises. Maybe they dress for school differently than you do. Maybe they have a disability you know little about.



Hint: Be ready to tell your new partner "Hello" in their first language.

Listen Up!



That's how we find out what a partner needs and how they want us to help. Sit facing someone to practice. Choose a question you can answer with a short, personal story, for example, "When was a time someone unexpectedly helped you?" Take turns telling your story to each other. When your partner speaks, try to imagine being them in their story. Here are some ways to show you are listening carefully and caringly:

- Nod, as if to say, "That's interesting."
- Do not interrupt or start your story until your partner is done.
- When they are done, ask a question to learn more about something they said.
- Give each other feedback afterward.
- Did your partner believe you listened and understood what they said?
- How did they know?



Make Mirror Magic

Face another person as if you were looking in a mirror. Press your palms on your partner's. Take turns leading and following movements and facial expressions. Can you switch roles without using words?

- Is it harder to be the leader or the mirror?
- Is it tempting to make things hard for your mirror, rather than working together so they can follow you?
- How does it feel to focus completely on your partner?



Partners Who "Harvest Hope"

In California, the first Unitarian Church of Oakland sits near a city center. In Transylvania, a province of Romania, the Unitarian church in Ok'land (oak-LAHND) serves a small, rural village. The California congregation wanted to help the Ok'land Unitarians bring jobs to their village. But a country recovering from years under a cruel dictator is not the same as California. The leaders in Oakland, California, had to learn to be patient and listen to the people in Transylvania. The leaders in Ok'land, Transylvania, had to learn it was safe to discuss problems and solutions. And they decided they needed a flour mill and bakery

to create jobs for people to mill grain and bake and sell bread. Their California partners joined them to form Project Harvest Hope and raise money to get the flour mill and bakery up and running. Next, the folks in Ok'land, Transylvania, decided they needed a dairy farm that would meet the standards of the European Union. Project Harvest Hope raised money to buy cows and hire experts to help. With fifty cows to milk in a clean, modern barn, the people in the village could afford to educate their children.

Oakland and Ok'land are very different. But their shared Unitarian heritage and a commitment to partnership link them together to benefit them both.

**Come not to judge, but to open your heart...
Dance and sing as if you have stumbled upon
an amazing party. You have.**

**Only simple gifts are needed.
Remember we cannot embrace if we
come with our arms full of gifts...**

From *Most Like an Arch* by David Keyes, Center for Free Religion, 1999

In Every Season, Partnership

By Eric Cherry

It's 85 degrees on a humid September afternoon as I deplane at the Manila airport, in the Philippines. En route to grab my baggage, I hear the unmistakable melody of... "Silent Night." In September? Hmmm. After 20 sleepless hours on airplanes, I could be hallucinating.

A couple days later, out of the corner of my eye: Is that a Christmas tree? Jet lag is no longer a viable excuse. Maybe they didn't have time to put it away last year.

The next day, in a local shop, not only are Christmas decorations on full display, but the shopkeeper is doing a brisk business selling them. Finally embracing my curiosity, I ask a friend about it. "Yes! We like Christmas so much that we start celebrating in August."

I told this story a few weeks later during a UU worship service in the Philippines as an example of how international partnerships challenge our cultural assumptions and ask us to face differences. The story gave us a chance to laugh together. And, as if to underscore the lesson in joyous expansion, the child dedication ceremony that morning had been quickly adjusted to include two more children. September it may have been, yet the grace and joy of Christmas were definitely in the air.

Each night a child is born is a Holy Night. Not just in December.

And who will be the partners of these children? Who will be the partners of these parents? The list of promisers and their vows is long. These families—in fact, it seems, this village—will raise these children. This congregation will hold them. The faith we all share, even encompassing so many beautiful differences, will guide them. And some among us can be their partners as well—even from the other side of the world.

- **What promises do you make to your children, as part of your faith? To other people's children?**
- **How can you be a partner to children across the globe, whom you may never meet?**

Rev. Eric Cherry, Director of the International Office of the UUA, traveled to the Philippines in 2014 on sabbatical.

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FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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FIND OUT MORE

■ The UU Partner Church Council (UUPCC) operates as a matching and mentorship service, helping American and Canadian congregations make meaningful, mutually beneficial connections with Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist faith communities abroad. International partnership highlights shared religious principles and illuminates the different histories and expressions of our faith around the world. UUPCC supports partnerships by supporting the communities abroad to conduct their own needs assessment process and guiding American and Canadian congregations to prepare to be effective partners across cultural barriers. Find out more: www.uupcc.org

■ The Tapestry of Faith curricula represented in these pages include Sing to the Power and Moral Tales.