



KONA UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

*The Mission of the United Methodist Church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ
for the transformation of the world.*

*The Vision of Kona United Methodist Church is growing disciples
through worship, outreach, and living the gospel.*

A Brief History¹

The word church in the Bible comes from the Greek word *ecclesia*, which means a called out company or assembly. Wherever it is used in the Bible it refers to the people who gathered. The establishment of Kona United Methodist Church (KUMC) was begun in 1982 with the people who moved from Hilo as a core group.

Steve and Charlene Bess who were the members of Hilo United Methodist Church (HUMC) moved to Kona for a new job in 1982. They were not able to find a mainline Protestant Church to attend. So, they asked Rev. Brian Sanderson who was the pastor at HUMC to conduct services in Kona for them and other people they found who had the same problem. Rev. Sanderson and the leadership team of HUMC (Dennis Y. Suenobu and Richard Matsunaga) agreed to offer a Christian worship service on the first Sunday of every month in the evening. At first, they met at alternate homes like the Clancy home with five families, but moved to the Kona YMCA as the numbers grew.

In 1983, the Bishop made a unique appointment for the three United Methodist churches on the Big Island—Hilo United Methodist Church (Rev. Peter Vaught), Honokaa United Methodist Church (Rev. Earl Kernahan), and Pāhala-Naalehu United Methodist Church (Pastor Tom)—to share their pastoral leadership with the people of Kona in cultivating a new congregation. These appointed pastors were traveling around the island to offer their pastoral leadership over the people of Kona like a “circuit rider” in a Wesleyan fashion.

By 1985, the number of people attending the service had gotten close to fifty, so the meeting was held at the Old King Kamehameha Hotel and then the parking lot of a local irrigation company owned by the Crossley family. The developing congregation moved beyond the bi-weekly worship schedule of the Big Island pastors, so the congregation received two hard working interns solidly focusing on developing its ministry. The momentum in ministry was created and expanded even more to include sponsoring the people of Tonga in Kona.

In 1987, the Bishop appointed Rev. Hayden Sears as an interim pastor, and then Rev. Bob Wicherts formalizing the people of Kona as “Kona United Methodist Church.” During that time Hawaiian United Methodist Union (HUMU) bought four one-acre lots as the property for KUMC. In 1988, the parsonage was built and the worship services were held on the parsonage lanai while building the multi-purpose pavilion on the south-east corner of the lots. For paying off the parsonage mortgage, the north-west corner of the lots was sold.

Construction for the current multi-purpose pavilion also began around 1987 and was built with the help of many members including snowbirds who would stay for extended periods of time.

¹ Compiling all information about the history of Kona UMC is still a work in process. This is not a final.

Kona UMC was chartered on March 26, 1989, Easter Sunday and therefore the church's anniversary is celebrated every Easter. Of the original 66 charter members, there are four: Gloria Juan, Norma Julia, Sue Pyun and Lisa Uemura who continue to faithfully attend KUMC.

The Tongans were a part of the original fellowship before the church charter as they were a religious sponsored group. As their numbers grew, Rev. Sione Veikoso was appointed to oversee both English Language Ministry and Tongan fellowship within the congregation in 1993. Thus, the Tongan Language ministry was officially formalized in 1996 with the leadership of Rev. Miki Pousima who was the local pastor appointed to KUMC as Associate Pastor focusing on Tongan Language Ministry while Rev. Eric Scott was appointed as Senior Pastor overseeing the ministry of KUMC. The Samoan language ministry joined in 1994, left for a period and then reunited in 2013.

Because the United Methodist Church maintains an itinerant (i.e. rotational) system, after being officially chartered as Kona UMC in 1989, several pastors were appointed through the years as shown below: SENIOR PASTORS [Rev. Bob Wicherts (1989-1993), Rev. Sione Veikoso (1993-1996), Rev. Eric Scott (1996-2002), Rev. Harry Garrison (2002-2003), Rev. Dan Lewis (2003-2007), Rev. Dr. George Crisp (2007-2009), Rev. Dr. Richard Stinson (2009-2012), Rev. Dr. Krista S. Givens (2012-2016), and Rev. Dr. Sunny Ahn (2016-now)] and ASSOCIATE PASTORS [Rev. Miki Pousima (1996-1999), Rev. Tevita Maile (1999-2006), and Rev. Malakai Tatafu (2006-now)].

Currently, all three language ministries come together as Kona United Methodist Church to worship, perform outreach and live the gospel hand in hand to carry out the mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.