

Kona UMC- Congregational Letter (04-16-2021)

Greetings fellow members and friends of Kona United Methodist Church (KUMC),

I hope you all are in good health. This past year has been a very trying time for KUMC. Prior to the COVID crisis we were engaged in a five-year visioning process, “**making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**” Now, one year later we are engaged in trying to return to a reasonable level of “normal” church worship.

Church members are asking, “when can we return to normal church services?” In making that decision, we are guided by multiple jurisdictions and policy guidance from the State and County, Cal-Pac Conference, and our own KUMC health taskforce.

Thanks to the leadership of Pastor Sunny, Pastor Tone, church leaders, and many committee members we have created a “new normal” to meet the spiritual needs of our congregation. We have not missed a single Sunday service since the COVID crisis began. Pastor Sunny our media tech guru and other tech savvy congregants enable us to offer on-line, Facebook, Zoom, and drive-in radio broadcasts for those who wish to engage in a “new normal” worship. Pastor Tone established two Facebook-live Tongan services on Sunday and Wednesday.

One of the unanticipated bright spots and a step toward accomplishing our mission- **making disciples of Jesus Christ**- occurred when we identified an underserved group of individuals- the deaf and hard of hearing. What a blessing in a time of trial for us to be able to focus on meeting the spiritual needs of those individuals who heretofore may have been forgotten.

As of this date, the leadership at KUMC has endorsed a conservative approach to opening KUMC to unlimited on-site attendance. The Hawaii County policy limits general gatherings to 25 people wearing masks and practicing social distance. The Cal-Pac Conference guidance is no more than 50 percent of capacity and maintaining social distance. Our floor space will allow us to have approximately 30 participants. Federal guidance for social distance (floor space calculations) allows us seating of 30 participants. In addition, we can seat 10 to 12 people on the walkway and in the grass area. So, all things considered we have seating capacity for 35 people in the immediate Sanctuary and outside seating area.

The advantage we, at KUMC, have is our ability to have more than 35 people at our service, thanks to our radio broadcast option. We have a radio frequency- 1650 AM- on which we broadcast a live Sunday service to those parked in the Church parking lots. Congregants can get out of their vehicles and sit in their own chairs, listen, and participate in the service. This option allows attendees to participate in communion, experience the service live, and visit with others while wearing masks and maintaining social distance.

I encourage you to engage in the “new normal” English or Tongan services on Sunday. Join us in the Sanctuary, from the comfort of your car, from home live on Facebook, or Zoom or tune-in the pre-recorded service at 10:00 am on Sunday on our website.

Thank you all for your continued support of our Church, its mission, and service to our community as we continue to **make disciples of Jesus**

Christ for the transformation of the world. Tim Brady, Chair, Church Council.