

Grace, Peace, and Aloha to you all . . .

My name is Joyce Brady. I'm the English Language Ministry Lay Leader here at Kona United Methodist Church on the Big Island of Hawaii.

On behalf of the Kona UMC Delegation Team, it's my great privilege to briefly share the message from attending the 37th Annual Session of the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, which was held June 17th thru 19th via Zoom Webinar. Pastor Sunny, Pastor Tone, Tavite Talasinga - the Tongan Language Ministry Lay Leader, and Donny Avea'i - the Samoan Language Ministry Lay Leader, and I attended the Annual Session as delegates from Kona UMC.

I don't want to minimize any parts of the Annual Session, such as Ordination; recognizing those who have retired or passed away; ministry reports or legislation. However, due to time constraints, I'm not able to share all the details of the Annual Session. And I actually think I'm hearing some sighs of relief from you all! Those of you who wish to capture the details of the three-day Annual Session, can visit The California-Pacific Annual Conference website www.calpacumc.org/ac2021. Please contact our Pastors or Lay Leaders with any questions.

I would like to highlight the theme of the 37th Annual Session – “*Restoration: Parables of the Pandemic*.” The Parables of the Pandemic focused on spiritual lessons and the act of “restoration.” Our Bishop, Grant Hagiya, shared that the Japanese art of “*Kintsugi*” is the art of repairing broken pottery with gold, which is a metaphor for brokenness being made whole. “*Kintsugi*” is a reminder that brokenness is not the end of the story. It's a parable of repair, healing, and restoration for us today. It's a reminder that we serve a God who is the Master Potter and can restore us.

Several pastors and laity spoke about restoration and their respective congregational pandemic experiences. I would like to relate one experience from Reverend Adrienne Zachery, Senior Pastor at Crossroads UMC, a small member church, in Compton, California. The pandemic gave Crossroads UMC congregation an opportunity to be deployed from the safety of the Sanctuary and dispatched to where the church was needed the most in social justice ministry. When 3,500 men and women from the Los Angeles County Jail were dismissed

due to the Covid pandemic, Crossroads UMC provided hygiene kits and ministered to those men and women looking for a fresh start. Crossroads UMC was a tangible, intentional blessing to those whose lives were overlooked or invisible.

The Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5, Verses 14 and 16 states: “*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden . . . In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*”

We are called to minister to the least of them when we are given an opportunity to let our light shine and be God’s hands, feet, and heart in the world.

So, what about closer to home here at Kona UMC? How did we demonstrate restoration - brokenness being made whole? We not only survived the pandemic, but we thrived. I would like to highlight two instances, in particular:

The first is Online Worship: Although directed by the government in March 2020 to restrict in-person Worship Services due to Covid, we did not miss a single Sunday Worship Service. Pastor Sunny and Pastor Tone took immediate action to use the blessing (and sometimes curse) of technology to transition from in-person to solely Online Worship Services. Our Online Worship Services provided a connection during a period of social isolation. Our Online Worship Service attendance has grown three to four times what we would normally experience as we continue to grow the Kingdom of God! *Kintsugi. Restoration. Letting our light shine and glorifying our Father in heaven.*

The second is Deaf Ministry: Unexpectedly, we had an opportunity to make a tangible, intentional blessing to serve the deaf and hard of hearing community using ASL in our 10am Online Worship Service, which is a deaf and hard of hearing friendly service and has been adopted by two national organizations – The United Methodist Committee for Deaf & Hard of Hearing Ministries and The United Methodist Congress of the Deaf. *Kintsugi. Restoration. Letting our light shine to glorify our Father in heaven.*

And what about each of us? How do we experience brokenness being made whole? What does restoration look like in our families? In our community? In our nation or the world? What actions do we take when something is broken to make it whole?

We are the light of the world. That’s a bold call to action. God has equipped each one of us with gifts. . . gifts that are meant to be nurtured and shared and be a

blessing to others for such a time as this. “Here I am Lord. I surrender to Your will. Use me.” Will we partner with God, let our light shine before others, and use our gifts to be instruments of God’s love? The choice is ours.

May God bless you all and may His Light shine upon you!