

Aloha, everyone! Before starting my message today, I would like to give thanks to our Heavenly Father for giving us another day to live and see how blessed we are through Him in each day of our lives. Let us pray:

*Lord, I'm going to deliver Your message today. Help me to speak through the language we know so that Your people might be able to know You better. Amen.*

Thank you, Pastor Sunny, for letting me share a message today in my heart.

Today, I am before you on behalf of the Kona UMC Delegation Team and Hawaii District Delegation Team for the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. It was a hybrid conference, so the meeting was held online and in-person. The sessions were held online on June 7<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and both online & in-person on June 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. From our church, Pastor Sunny, Mr. Tavite Talasinga, Turi Avea'i, and I attended both online and in-person sessions. Mrs. Joyce Brady participated in the sessions online.

I was a Young Adult Delegate to the session. It was my first time attending the conference. This was also the first time the conference was back to the in-person gathering since the shutdown of the in-person gatherings because of COVID. I was told that it was the first time the conference was held at a hotel instead of at the University of Redlands. Some people did not like it for some reason. I guess changes are hard for some people. Anyway, it was a hot topic whether we would have the next year's conference at a hotel or the University of Redlands. It took about an hour to talk about this. So, finally, Bishop Hagiya called the body to take a vote on surveying the location of the next year's conference so that the session committee could decide the site later. So, I believe the conference office will send each local church a survey form to respond to this matter.

In my humble opinion, it doesn't matter where this in-person gathering will take place. For me, just having a meeting in-person itself is a blessing. After shutting down and not engaging people in-person for a while due to the COVID, I am "hungry" to meet people in-person. My "emotional hunger" needs to be ended along with my "spiritual & physical hunger." I just love to hang out with people.

By the way, the theme for this year's annual session was "Vision: Ending Spiritual & Physical Hunger," based on the Book of James, chapter 2, verses 14 through 17. If I were to summarize the message of the conference, it would be: "Faith without works is dead." While doing "the church business," such as voting on Episcopal Nominations, Budget, Legislations, and more, the conference sessions focused on not only professing the faith but also living it.

The theme of the conference got me to think about faith. The book of Hebrews, chapter 11, verse 1, reads, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is the reality of what we hoped for but have not yet seen.

Within the frame of "Faith," I read the theme of the conference again and again—Ending Spiritual and Physical Hunger. As I thought of the theme related to my "faith," many questions came to my mind:

- How does ending spiritual and physical hunger affect faith or reflect on faith?
- What are we hungry for nowadays?
- What does our church need to do to bring people closer to God?
- What problems do we have here that stop us from coming to our Lord?
- Are we doing something to solve the issues around us?
- Are we coming together as we called ourselves "the United"?
- Are we losing our faith nowadays?
- Are we saying our situation is too big that we cannot be united, or we cannot deal with the different opinions in our lives?

As I thought of "faith & action" together, I had more questions than answers.

And then, I remember the story of Abraham in the book of Genesis, chapters 21 and 22. God tested Abraham's faith by asking him to sacrifice his son, Isaac. When asked, Abraham didn't ask the Lord back why he had to sacrifice his son. He just got up and went to the land of Moriah, where the Lord told him to make the offering. He did not think for a second. He just did it. Do you know why Abraham never asks the Lord why? He did because of his faith in God. He had faith that God would provide. So, he obeyed God without any questions. He fully trusted God. Indeed, God provided.

How many of us can do what Abraham did? How many of us have faith as Abraham had? Honestly, I don't have faith like Abraham. My faith is tiny. I am working on my faith each and every day 😊

To end my spiritual hunger, I attended worship. At the annual conference session, I attended many worships. Well, here at Kona UMC, I am not just attending the worship as a spectator or observer. I participate in worship as a prompter of worship to assist the congregation on a journey of worship, helping those who came to worship, like you, to voice their praise to God. Our worship has an audience of ONE—who is our God. To end your spiritual hunger, I invite you to actively participate in this worship with your prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness.

To live our faith, at the annual conference session, we assembled 2,000 hygiene kits as a service activity during the conference sessions. I was told that these assembled hygiene kits would go to the Mercy House and be given to the houseless.

To end the physical hunger, our church feeds the homeless at the shelter once a month. To end the physical hunger Turi and I had at the annual conference three meals a day and Pastor Sunny and Sung took us out to a Korean all-you-can-eat BBQ restaurant on the last day of the conference 😊

In closing, I would say that I had a great conference attending experience even though I did not see many youth and young adults as I expected. One thing I took from this annual conference is "Don't Give Up!" Start reaching out to your siblings and share with them the love of God in words and actions. Tell people about the love of God. Tell people how you experienced your God. Invite them to worship with you. All people need the Lord. All people carry some burdens in life. I pray that we all pray for each other and be kind to each other. I pray that we all hold on to our faith in God the Provider, and don't give up on God, on ourselves, and on each other. Let us keep reaching out in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.