

# *pacific* connector



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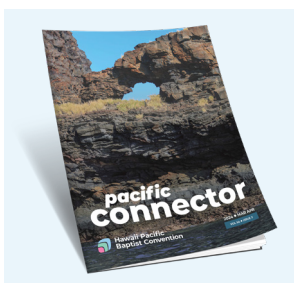
# Building the Kingdom



## Craig Webb

Executive Director/Treasurer

808-946-9581  
craig@hpbaptist.net



### About the Cover

Hulupo'e Bay, Island of Lāna'i (Licensed Adobe Stock Photo). Hawaii Pacific Baptists have one church on Lāna'i, Lāna'i Baptist Church, pastored by Chris Komatsu.



### For More Issues

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hpbaptist.net/pacificconnector

## From One Servant Leader to Another

Imagine that the Holy Spirit is at work in a young man in your community who does not know Christ. A faithful believer listens to the Spirit's direction and shares the gospel with this young man. As a miraculous work of God, this young man is brought from spiritual death to spiritual life, repents of his sin, and confesses Jesus Christ as God's Son and the risen Savior. Praise God!

At this point, God Almighty asks, "Where is there a church in this community that proclaims my Word faithfully, who will welcome this young man into their fellowship as he is, baptize, and disciple him to maturity and teach him to disciple others?" Brothers and sisters, would the answer be your church? Or would God have to look elsewhere because of apathy or conflict in your church? Would he have to look elsewhere because your church is so inwardly focused?

This is what is at stake as we take the Great Commission seriously. This will take all of us humbly working together as believers, church leaders, associations, and as Hawaii Pacific Baptists. Will you ask God to strengthen you as a disciple and disciple-maker? Will you ask God for the Holy Spirit's courage and power to lay down your agenda and pride for the sake of the gospel? Will you forgive as Christ forgave you? I am personally asking God to help me to do this very thing.

For the Sake of the Gospel!

Craig Webb  
HPBC executive director-treasurer

### Pacific Connector — 2042 Vancouver Dr, Honolulu HI 96822 • 808-946-9581

**Executive Director, Editor:** Craig Webb • craig@hpbaptist.net • 808-946-9581

**Associate Editor:** Dawn Akutagawa • dawn@hpbaptist.net • 808-946-9581

**Contributing Editor:** Brandon Pickett | **Designer:** Patti Spencer

**Contributing Writers:** Robert Miller, Diana Ventura, Andrew T. Walker, Craig Webb, John and Gay Williams

The *Pacific Connector* highlights people and churches that work to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ by reaching the Pacific and Asia. For information about the *Pacific Connector* or the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention email info@hpbaptist.net, or call (808) 946-9581, or write to Pacific Connector, Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, 2042 Vancouver Drive, Honolulu HI 96822.

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A photograph of two men shaking hands. One man is wearing a grey hoodie and a black vest, the other is wearing a blue baseball cap and a pink shirt. They are standing outdoors with a white van in the background.

# Annie Armstrong Easter Offering<sup>®</sup>

FOR NORTH AMERICAN MISSIONS

HPBC goal: \$125,000

## Week of Prayer 2024

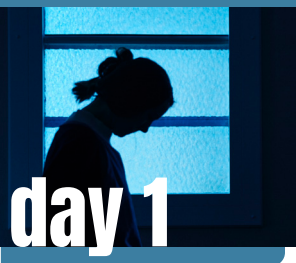
March 3-10

Every year, SBC churches observe the Week of Prayer for North American missions by praying for missionaries, their ministries and their families. Because these missionaries make Jesus known in places all over the U.S. and Canada where there's little or no gospel witness, they experience opposition and they battle loneliness and discouragement. That's why they need your prayers.

This year, the official date for the Week of Prayer is March 3-10. Your church can choose this week or any other time during the Easter season to participate. Your prayers and gifts to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering will fuel their work. The national offering goal for this year is \$75 million. The HPBC goal is \$125,000.

**281 MILLION**

**are estimated to be  
living without Christ**



## Lost

281 million is a big number. How big? When someone says the word “missionary”, it’s perfectly natural for most people to think of someone in a faraway place. That makes sense. There’s a vast mission field “out there.” But for some people, putting a name and face on just one or two of the estimated 281 million lost people living “right here” in the U.S. and Canada changes everything.



## Jefferson & Carol Hernandez Sterling, Virginia

Many years ago, Jefferson and Carol Hernandez had an American dream. They came to the U.S. looking for wealth and prosperity. But when they found something much better than that, they started a church called, appropriately enough, Campo Blanco (White Field). Now, in a place where Latin American immigrants are arriving seemingly every day, Jefferson and Carol are making Jesus known to their Hispanic neighbors.



## Joseph & Kristen Gibbons Las Vegas, Nevada

It’s 1,914 miles from Joseph and Kristen Gibbons’ old home in Alabama to their new home in Las Vegas. It might as well be a million miles. Several years ago, the Gibbons left their comfortable, Bible Belt community and moved to “Sin City” to start Favor City Church. Now, Joseph and Kristen know all about culture shock. But they also know all about the power of the gospel.



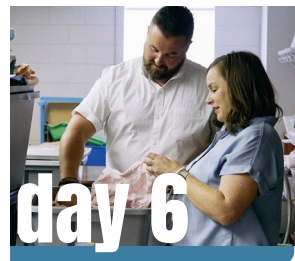
## Faith Garland Boston, Massachusetts

Sometimes it takes a prodigal to know a prodigal. Maybe that’s why Faith Garland, a missionary at the Send Relief Boston Ministry Center, has so many opportunities to make Jesus known. Faith’s troubled past helps her connect with strippers, prostitutes and other women in Boston who’re in danger of being trafficked. She leads volunteers out onto the streets where they share the hope of Christ with the prodigals they find there.



## Alayu & Yegile Dubale Denver, Colorado

There was a time when Alayu Dubale would’ve described Lemma Azene as his “chief persecutor.” That’s because 40 years ago in Ethiopia, when a teenage Alayu gave his life to Christ, Lemma was the one who sent him to jail. Now, Alayu and Lemma are best friends who along with their families are planting churches that are making Jesus known to the 50,000 Ethiopians who’ve come to live in Denver.



## Josh & Beth Glymph Jacksonville, Florida

The Glymphs are an eclectic looking family and that’s just the way they like it. In addition to their two biological children, Josh and Beth Glymph have three adopted children. God used their experience with adoption and foster care to start and grow Refuge Church, a very unusual church in a very unchurched neighborhood of Jacksonville, Florida.



## Noelson & Edna Chery Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Their worship leader is 16 years old. They meet in a karate studio. The sermon is in English, or Haitian Creole, or sometimes both. But the most unusual thing about Philadelphia’s First Haitian Metanoia Baptist Church might be this: Noelson Chery and his wife Edna never had any intention of starting this church. And yet here they are, baptizing new believers and watching God grow a very unexpected church plant.



## Found

When God sends missionaries like the ones featured here into places where the gospel has not yet reached, amazing things happen. Today there are more than 3,000 Southern Baptist missionaries making Jesus known in communities all over the U.S. and Canada. They’re starting new churches, meeting physical needs and baptizing new believers. This is what happens when you pray: the gospel spreads.

## Fujimoto Honored for His Part in Maui Fires Relief

by HPBC Disaster Relief Directors  
John and Gay Williams

Michael Fujimoto of Hawaii Kai Church was awarded the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Distinguished Service Award at the January Disaster Relief Roundtable in Newark, Delaware. The award was presented to Michael by Coy Webb, Crisis Response Director, SEND Relief. Michael was honored for his hard work and commitment throughout the long Maui Wildfire response. The award is presented to those individuals who went beyond the call of duty and distinguished themselves during a disaster response.

During the HPBC DR deployment,

Michael led the effort to establish the process and procedure for running the Haggai International Institute, where displaced citizens, Red Cross, off-island Fire and Police, National Guard, and Disaster Relief volunteers were housed. He demonstrated creative problem-solving skills through highly complex housing issues. He deployed four times and spent months in the field supporting this work.

He was truly instrumental in the success of this deployment and provided critical support so that the people of Lahaina

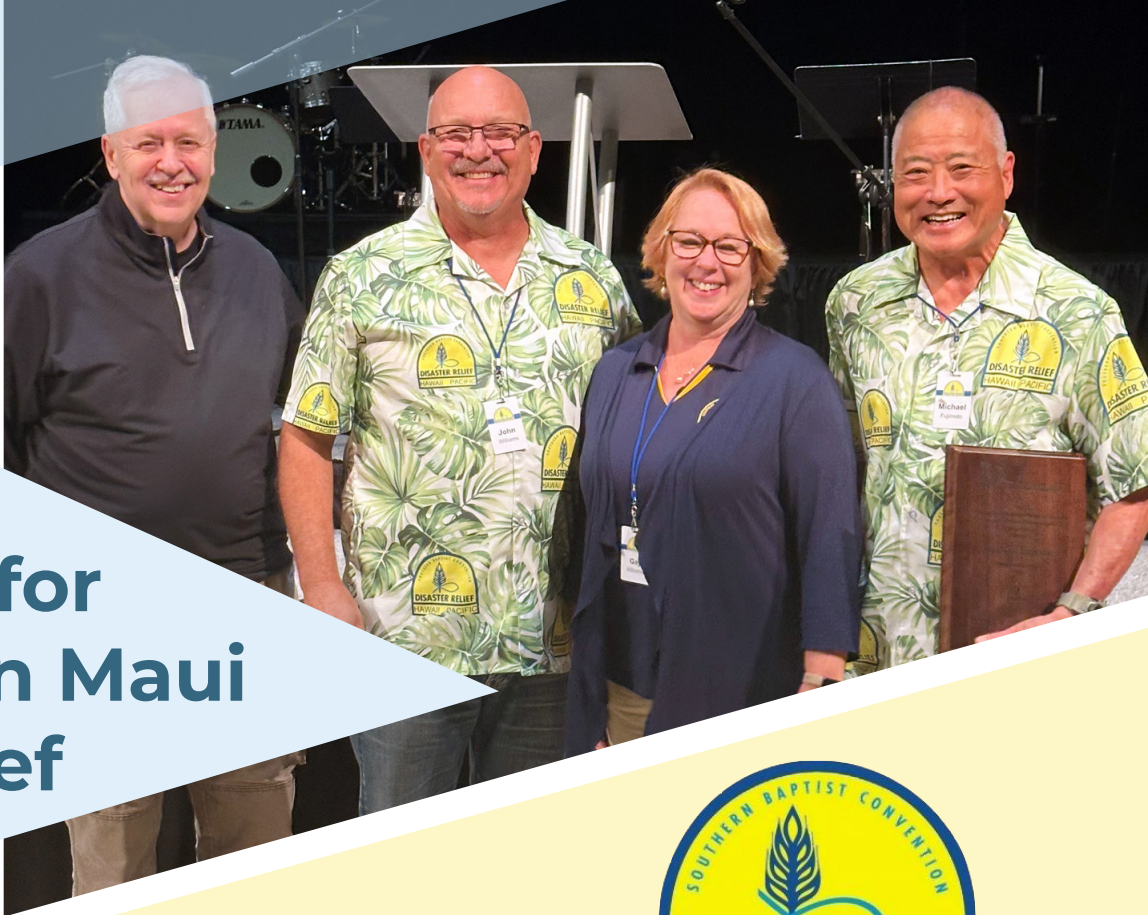
could be served. Michael was the first volunteer to arrive with the Convention Directors. After his initial two-week deployment, he returned numerous times, including the final two weeks, to help close the operation. His commitment to bring help, hope, and healing was demonstrated in a very practical way.



### *Photos:*

*Top:* Michael Fujimoto with John and Gay Williams and Coy Webb at the Disaster Relief Roundtable in Newark, Delaware

*Bottom:* Michael Fujimoto receives award from Send Relief's Coy Webb



## Hilo Korean Christian Church Installs Lee as Pastor

On Sunday, January 21, 2024, Hilo Korean Christian Church held an installation service for Rev. Daniel Hyun-Soo Lee. Pastor Kyu Ho Chang of Emmanuel Korean Church on Oahu

presided, and HPBC's Craig Webb brought greetings from HPBC and a challenge to Pastor Lee.



## Mililani Ordains Deacons

Pastor Dennis Andrews shared that Mililani Baptist held an ordination service to set Matt

Beall and Randy Grant apart as deacons on October 29.



## Fellowship Church Continues Monthly Outreach in Kalihi

On January 27, 2024, Fellowship Church on Oahu continued its monthly outreach with food distribution at Kalihi Valley Homes Kam IV housing. They served 60 families. Clyde Kakiuchi, a leader at Fellowship, shared that two individuals and one family began attending Fellowship Church due to the outreach. Harlan Nakasone is their pastor. Your church's gifts partly supported this event through the Cooperative Program via a grant from the Global Hunger Fund.



## Valley Isle Baptizes Nine at the End of December

Pastor Nic Love of Valley Isle Fellowship on Maui shared that they baptized nine persons from multiple generations. The oldest was 100!



## Mililani Baptizes at Ali'i Beach Park

Pastors Dennis Andrews of Mililani Baptist on Oahu shared that Glenn Yamamoto recently trusted in Christ as his Savior and was baptized at Ali'i Beach Park on Sunday, December 3.



## HPBC Staff Gathers with Collegiate Ministries Team to Honor Irwin Family



On Monday, February 5, the HPBC staff gathered with Baptist Collegiate Ministries staff and interns, International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries on stateside assignment, and the IMB's Phillip, Ashleigh, Bella, and Emma Irwin. This gathering expressed appreciation to, honored, and bid Aloha to the Irwin family as they prepared to move to Osaka, Japan, at the end of February. The Irwins served in East Asia for eight years before leaving the field. The Irwins have worked as IMB Asia Pacific Rim People's Affinity (APAC) student strategists for the past 3 1/2 years from Pu'u Kahea. They will continue their role as student strategists for APAC and partner with the IMB Osaka team to reach students for Christ in the Osaka area.

While the Irwins were in Hawaii, as part of our partnership with IMB, they worked with over 40 Hawaii Pacific Baptist churches and Collegiate Ministries in Manoa and Hilo. Pray for the Irwin family as they make this transition. You support the Irwins and over 3500 other IMB missionary units globally with your gifts



through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The Irwins shared, "Thank you, everyone, for the amazing love and care you have shown our family! We feel truly blessed to have met so many of you throughout the islands and are blown away by the love of Christ your churches have consistently shown us. Your heart for the nations and your communities is apparent in your actions. Hawaii has become a home for us, and we are sad but grateful to have so many here we call friends and family as we say a hui hou! Mahalo nui loa and aloha!"

## Pastors Gather on Oahu for Monthly Fellowship and Discussion

The Oahu Baptist Network (OBN) Pastors Fellowship met Wednesday, January 31. Pastor Fola Ioane hosted the group at Aina Haina Baptist. God provided fellowship, encouragement, food, discussion, and prayer time for the pastors. The HPBC's Robert Miller guided our discussion, and Pastor Jamie McElrath, pastor at Olivet Baptist, guided our prayer time. Pastor Bong Abagon is the moderator for OBN. This is a great partnership between HPBC and OBN. Your gifts through the Cooperative Program support the work of the HPBC staff as we seek to strengthen pastors for their work.





# Deaf Camp Hawaii

## Third Deaf Camp Hawaii to be Held March 2024

From January 3-5, 2024, Hawaii Pacific Baptist and Tennessee Baptist Churches held the second Deaf Camp Hawaii at First Baptist Church Pearl City. Deaf Camp Hawaii is an American Sign Language Day Camp for deaf children, their siblings, and children of deaf adults ages 6-14.

As part of a partnership with the Tennessee Baptist Mission Board, Brentwood Baptist Deaf Church (Pastor Aric Randolph), KirbyWoods Baptist Deaf Church, Memphis (Pastor Larry White), and The Deaf Church Knoxville (Pastor Arthur Clayton) worked with Hawaii Pacific Baptists to hold this special event. Members of FBC Pearl City, University Avenue Baptist, Nu'uano Baptist, and New Hope Church served as volunteers.

From **March 19-22, 2024**, Deaf Camp Hawaii will be offered again at First Baptist Church Pearl City with a full day of crafts, stories, dramas, songs to sign, fun Bible stories, deaf games, and recreation. Breakfast and lunch are provided. Sterling Lee is the pastor of FBC Pearl City.

For more information and to register, visit:  
**[thedeafcamp.com/hawaii](http://thedeafcamp.com/hawaii)**

Deaf Camp Hawaii is supported partly by your gifts through the Sue Nishikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions.



**Sue Nishikawa  
Offering**  
for Hawaii Pacific Missions



Watch a video with highlights from Deaf Camp Hawaii by visiting [tinyurl.com/HPBC-deafcamp](http://tinyurl.com/HPBC-deafcamp), or by scanning the QR code above.

# Next Gen

## EVANGELISM CONFERENCE



**MARCH 8-9**  
**Friday & Saturday**

**University Avenue Baptist Church**  
2305 University Avenue, Honolulu, Hawaii

### Speaker

**Paul Worcester**  
National Collegiate Director  
North American Mission Board (NAMB)

**FREE** Because of the generous support of our partners, there is no charge to attend, but please register using the information provided below.

**Come and experience**  
**Paul Worcester as he**  
**encourages, inspires, and**  
**equips attendees towards**  
**evangelism to the next generation**  
**and all generations!**

Learn more and register at  
**[uabchawaii.org/nextgen](http://uabchawaii.org/nextgen)**  
or by calling University Avenue Baptist Church at  
**808-947-5008**

**Friday, March 8** (6 pm - 9 pm)

6:00 pm - 7:00 pm - Dinner

7:00 pm - 9:00 pm - Session 1 plus Q&A

**Saturday, March 9** (9 am - 1 pm)

9:00 am - 10:00 am - Continental Breakfast

10:00 am - 11:00 am - Session 2

11:00 am - 11:15 am - Break

11:15 am - 12:15 pm - Session 3

12:15 pm - 1:00 pm - Lunch

This event is sponsored by University Avenue Baptist Church, Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) Oāhu, the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention, and the North American Mission Board.



UNIVERSITY AVENUE  
BAPTIST CHURCH



Hawaii Pacific  
Baptist Convention



North American  
Mission Board

March April 2024 ■ [hpbaptist.net](http://hpbaptist.net)



# Sean Lathrop

## *Retires After Four Decades of Ministry in Hawaii*

by Robert Miller

After 41 years of faithful service among Hawai'i Pacific Baptists, Sean Lathrop moved on to the next season of life February 1. While serving in the islands, Lathrop's resumé includes serving as pastor, teacher, director, and catalyst.

From 1983 to 1987, Lathrop served as Pastor of Waimea Baptist Church on the island of Kauai. This was his first ministry assignment after graduating from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (now Gateway) in 1978. Later, in 1987, he moved to Oahu to work with students at Hawai'i Baptist Academy as a Bible teacher for five years.

Then, from 1993 to 2015, Lathrop took on the role of Baptist Collegiate Ministries Director, where he served and discipled college students. For 22 years, Lathrop found great joy in working with college students. "It was fulfilling to have a small part in the lives of our future leaders," Lathrop added.

Lathrop's final assignment was to serve church planters as a North American

Mission Board Church Planting Catalyst. From 2016 to 2024, his duties included equipping and encouraging church planters throughout our State Convention. Lathrop served well as an encourager. He had a way of encouraging those who were struggling in ministry.

After reflecting on his 41 years of service, Lathrop said, "I am very fortunate to have served the churches of HPBC. I am blessed and inspired to have served such a committed people." Lathrop added, "In all of my ministries, it was always about the gospel, telling people about Jesus and making disciples."

Sean Lathrop is married to Teresa, who has served as a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist since 1986. Together, they have three grown children and one grandchild. In retirement, Lathrop looks forward to spending time with family, especially his grandson. He also plans to return to canoe paddling.

# Kerey Smith Serves as New Pastor of Pyeongtaek Church Plant

**E**ight years ago, in 2016, Kerey Smith was part of the team from Seoul International Baptist, now Freedom Village Church, that planted a church near Camp Humphries in Pyeongtaek, South Korea. The church started with Saturday night services so Kerey and pastor Dan Armistead could lead services on Sunday mornings in Seoul. After two years, they realized that it wasn't going to grow past a small group unless they shifted to Sunday mornings. In 2018, they started the Sunday morning service with a rotation of pastors and worship leaders. Kerey wasn't preaching at the time but was helping with the administration and on the rotation for worship leadership.

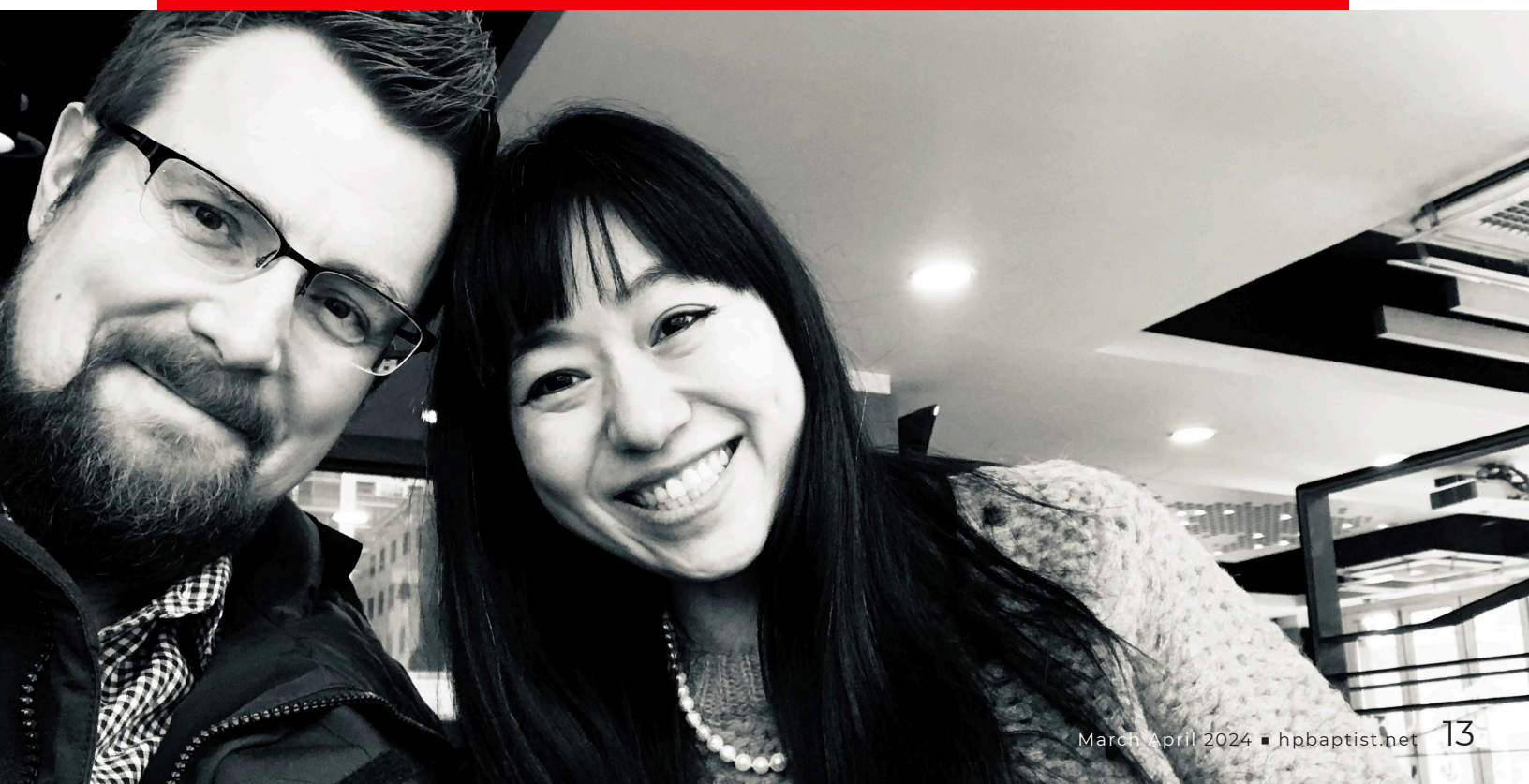
Kerey shared, "The church has never had a full-time pastor, but that was always our goal. We've had a few serious candidates, but it never worked out." At the end of 2021, after Pastor Armistead had retired and SIBC merged with the Way Church to become Freedom Village Church, their new pastor, James Lynch, and Kerey found someone willing to preach consistently at the Pyeongtaek church plant.

Kerey said, "We saw the church thrive under

consistent preaching, but the preaching pastor's wife's mother fell ill, and they had to head back to the US earlier than expected. This was at the end of 2022." That's when Kerey volunteered to fill in as the interim pastor until they could find someone willing to take the role more permanently.

In 2022, they had two serious candidates, but when both fell through, Kerey realized after a lot of prayer and consideration that the church was too small to be able to offer what all the candidates were asking. Both Kerey's wife, Bora, and he have a heart for this church and knew that the area needed a solid bible-teaching church with leadership willing to make sacrifices and minister to the military community and English-speaking civilians there. After prayer and discussion with Bora, Kerey decided to step forward and offer to take the position.

Please pray for Kerey and Bora Smith as they serve in this new role and for Freedom Village Church and Pastor James Lynch as they support their work from Seoul. Freedom Village Church is a Hawaii Pacific Baptist Church and part of the Asia Baptist Network.



# GuideStone's 2024 Ministers' Tax Guide for 2023 Returns

**As** a part of GuideStone's mission to enhance the financial security and resilience for those who serve the Lord, we are excited to provide our ministry partners and members with resources to help answer common tax-related questions and issues for ministers.

Our popular annual tax guide, written by Richard Hammar, J.D., LL.M., CPA, includes sample tax returns for both active and retired ministers and step-by-step instructions for each. Additionally, church treasurers, administrators and other church leaders will find a valuable resource in the guide's special section about important federal reporting requirements for churches at the end of the publication.

**GuideStone's Tax Guide** can be viewed or downloaded by visiting:  
**[guidestone.org/taxguide](https://guidestone.org/taxguide)**  
or by scanning this QR code:



## GuideStone®

## Ministerial tax issues can be complicated. GuideStone wants to help make it easier!

### *Other Free Resources from Guidestone Financial:*

Compensation planning resources for churches

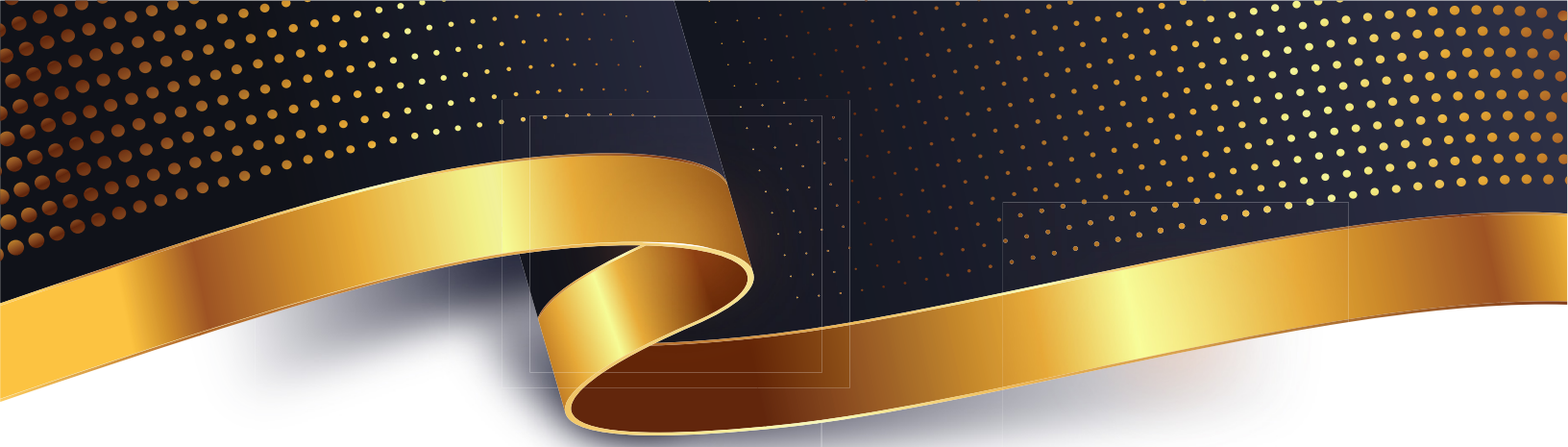
Ministerial Tax Issue Guide Download

Minister's Housing Allowance Questions & Answers



Find IRS forms, instructions and publications at **IRS.gov** or call **1-800-TAX-FORM** (1-800-829-3676).

For information, contact GuideStone at **Info@GuideStone.org** or **1-888-98-GUIDE** (1-888-984-8433) Monday through Friday, from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. CT.



# WMU Hawaii Celebrates 80 Years of Missions Focus

*By Diana Ventura, HPBC Director of Women's Ministries*

The Hawaii Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) will celebrate 80 years of ministry on Saturday, April 27, 2024, at its annual celebration in Honolulu. From 1944, when WMU was organized in Hawaii, to the present day, the heart of WMU is to make disciples of Jesus who live on mission. Based in Birmingham, Alabama, WMU's "unwavering focus on making disciples of Jesus who live on mission happens through missions discipleship, leadership development, and compassion ministries."

Hawaii WMU challenges all of us to the following:

- Pray intentionally and fervently for our missionaries using a monthly calendar to pray for missionaries on their birthday.
- Give towards missions through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, and the Sue Njshikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions.



- Share missionary stories from the past and present as evidence of how God is moving locally and globally.

As we continue to carry the torch, Hawaii WMU hosts a missions celebration every year. This is a time to worship God and hear testimonies from missionaries and ministries about how the gospel is being shared and how lives are transformed.

This year's **80th Anniversary Missions Celebration** will be held on **Saturday, April 27, 2024, in Honolulu at the Ala Moana Garden Lanai Ballroom.** Details and registration will be available in mid-March. This year's theme is Hope in Christ: God's Heart for the Nations. Ten Jocson is the president of the Hawaii Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

# A Christian Guide to Political Engagement

**A free resource for Christians facing an election year.**

By Andrew T. Walker

Every election is about getting the most votes—whether it is at the local level directly from voters or at the presidential level in the Electoral College.

Anxiety and animosity are a driving force behind a number of candidacies. Think of how many times you have heard an office seeker paint the next election as a battle between “us vs. them” or deploy dehumanizing language against opponents, specific groups, or the media.

## Why are election years so difficult?

During election season, there is a tendency to reduce complex issues to soundbites. As a consequence, voters are not required to think deeply about problems and solutions. Instead of substantively engaging, voters are asked to become partisan automatons or polarized performers.

So how do we see through the political gamesmanship and grift?

What can be done to think more deeply how to steward our votes instead of falling into the lazy “binary choice” framework?

Most importantly, how can we honor God as we engage in political decisions on Election Day—or any other day?

## What is a Christian Guide for Political Engagement?

This guide titled “The Nations Belong to God,” patterned off the ancient model of a catechism, is a starting point for Christians thinking about how

to engage the political processes around them. It is not the end of doctrine or teaching on any of these subjects, but a place to begin, a call to consider anew what it means for us to declare, “Jesus is Lord.”

Though this political catechism was written to help Christians facing an election year, and in a time when there is a growing sense of fear, polarization, vitriol, and apathy about the current landscape of politics, it is also a guide to how life should be lived every other day besides a Tuesday in November every four years. Our political participation should not be boiled down to a vote cast on one day, important as that vote may be.

In the face of an election year sure to be filled with angst, division, and fearmongering, the teachings of Jesus will be all the more important for a witness that is bold and hopeful. The hope flowing from a confidence that no matter who occupies the White House, Congress, or seats of power, our citizenship lies in heaven, and our work as ambassadors continues.

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*Andrew T. Walker is an Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Fellow with The Ethics and Public Policy Center. This guide is provided by the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), which is supported by your gifts through the Cooperative Program.*

“*Politics is about life in community with others, and those relationships exist even when candidates aren’t vying for our votes, donations, and attention.*”

Brent Leatherwood,  
ERLC President



THE ETHICS & RELIGIOUS  
LIBERTY COMMISSION  
OF THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

To view or download the Christian Guide for Political Engagement, go to [tinyurl.com/ERLC-PoliticalGuide](https://tinyurl.com/ERLC-PoliticalGuide) or scan this QR.

