



pacific **connector**



**Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention**

2026 • SEP OCT

VOL 56 • ISSUE 5

Building the Kingdom



Craig Webb

Executive Director/Treasurer



808-946-9581



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Aloha Hawaii Pacific Baptists,

I came home at the end of July from the first sabbatical of my forty years in ministry, and I want to say thank you! Thank you, HPBC Executive Board, for supporting it; thank you, HPBC staff team, for carrying the load; and thank you to so many of you who prayed for Barbara and me while we took this break. I came back rested and rejuvenated.

As I returned, I found out that while I was on break, you were on mission. Teams deployed for disaster relief, mission trips launched across the Pacific and beyond, Vacation Bible Schools, youth camps, and creative ways to reach people for Christ. Nobody waited for me. Christ said, *All authority has been given to me, and I am with you always*, and this summer you simply took Him at His word.

As you turn these pages, you're not reading a report on convention activity. You're reading stories of Christ's authority in action. Read the VBS stories from across the islands and the Pacific. Read about what God did at Haleiwa and through Calvary International. Then take a moment to thank Him ... because every one of these stories belongs to Him.

And please don't skip our Sue Nishikawa Week of Prayer pages. Sue's legacy is Hawaii Pacific Baptists at our best: ordinary obedience, sustained over a lifetime, in places where nobody was watching. This year, our team has produced a set of new videos to be used with the printed stories, and I'd ask you to do more than watch them yourself. Put them in front of your congregation. Show them Sunday morning. Send one to your WMU or your student ministry. Our churches give more generously and pray more specifically when they can see the faces behind the work.

Read how this month, something we've prayed toward for years becomes real: Gateway Seminary's Hawaii Pacific School of Theology launches with classes on Oahu, Maui, and the Big Island! Theological education, at home, for the pastors and leaders God is raising up in our islands and across the Pacific. For decades, our best and brightest have had to leave to be trained, and many never came back. That changes now.

I'll see you in a couple of weeks at the **Church Health Conference** at Olivet Baptist Church (Sep. 18-19). We had so many great stories that we had to take out the page about the conference! So sign up here: <https://tinyurl.com/chc-hawaii-2026>.

And make your plans now to be at our **Annual Meeting**, with Shane Pruitt, Jeff Iorg, and Adam Groza (Thu.-Fri., Nov. 19-20) and the new **Next Generations** equipping event (Sat., Nov. 21). I long to see Hawaii Pacific Baptists from every generation bringing glory to Christ (Eph. 3:21).

By His Authority and In His Presence,

Craig Webb
HPBC executive director-treasurer



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The *Pacific Connector* highlights people and churches that work to spread the Good News of Jesus by reaching the Pacific and Asia.

Information

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Online Access

The *Pacific Connector* is provided online, free of charge, and available at: hpbaptist.net/pacificconnector.

Designed by Innovative Faith Resources, a non-profit media firm, specializing in helping churches and non-profits with graphic design, video, branding, and financial services. For more information, visit innovativefaith.org.

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Sue Nishikawa 2026 Prayer Guide

DAY 1 - SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6

Hawaii Pacific Baptists Pray for Each Other

Matthew 28:18: 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.' Jesus' supreme authority is over all things. It is what equips and empowers us to do kingdom work where God has placed us today. He is at work and He invites us to join Him in reaching our islands. This week is the Sue Nishikawa Week of Prayer for Hawaii Missions. Let us join in prayer with unity and devotion.

DAY 2 - MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7

Planting Churches in Kahuku

Over the past year, Nasa and Caroline Sete have begun planting a church in Kahuku, building relationships and trusting God to establish gospel work. Pray for divine appointments, unity in their marriage, and wisdom as they homeschool their children.

DAY 3 - TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8

Revitalizing while Engaging the Community

Zeke and Layne Tomaselli serve at Waiakea Uka Bible Church in Hilo, where they are revitalizing the church, mentoring students through athletics, and engaging their community. Pray for opportunities to reach young people with the gospel and strengthen their local impact.

DAY 4 - WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9

Established Church with Missional Reach

Christ's authority is guiding Kona Baptist Church in faithful local and global missions through healthy leadership and partnerships. Pray Hawaii Pacific Baptist churches remain gospel-centered, joyfully making disciples and advancing the Great Commission among every nation.

DAY 5 - THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10

Strengthening Pastors and Wives

Through your giving, more than 40 pastors attended the pastor's retreat on Oahu for refreshment and renewal. Pray pastors and their families would be strengthened as they pursue healthy ministry, strong marriages, and intentional family life.

DAY 6 - FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11

Safe House for Women

Pastor Mike and Monica Brennan have established a safe house for women escaping human trafficking while replanting a local church. Pray the women they serve find hope, healing, protection, and their true identity in Jesus Christ.

DAY 7 - SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12

Healthy Churches Equip & Train Leaders

Advance training equips pastors and church leaders to strengthen churches through discipleship and evangelism. Your gifts provide scholarships for seminary and conferences. Pray these opportunities continue to equip and encourage Hawaii Pacific Baptists for faithful gospel ministry.

DAY 8 - SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 13

Shared Mission

Thank you for praying and giving through the Sue Nishikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions. Together, let us stand united in Christ's authority, partnering in prayer and mission to advance the Great Commission.

HAWAII PACIFIC BAPTISTS ALL AUTHORITY IN CHRIST



From reaching our communities to next generation ministries, from theological and missions education to church planting, and so much more... you are advancing God's kingdom through your faithful prayers and support of the **SUE NISHIKAWA OFFERING FOR HAWAII PACIFIC MISSIONS.**



**Sue Nishikawa
Offering**
for Hawaii Pacific Missions

Mission offering materials are made possible by gifts from your church through the Sue Nishikawa Offering and the Cooperative Program, and are made available by the HPBC Woman's Missionary Union and the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention.

Hawaii Pacific Goal

\$130,000



Gateway Seminary Hawaii Pacific School of Theology Launches

by Craig Webb

Accredited theological education has come home to the Pacific.

This fall, the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology is offering classes on O'ahu, Maui, and the Big Island — New Testament 1 and Bible Teaching on O'ahu in Friday evening and Saturday intensive formats, and Bible Teaching on Maui and in Hilo on alternating weekends. The schedule is built for working pastors and lay leaders who want to grow theologically without leaving their ministry field or their families.

If you'd like to join a future term, apply to Gateway Seminary at enroll.gs.edu/apply using code GOGATEWAY to waive the \$50 application fee. Shiraki Memorial Foundation scholarships are available to Hawaii students, along with Gateway financial aid for those who qualify.

Dr. Paul Kelly, Director of the Hawaii Pacific School of Theology, is ready to answer your questions and walk you through enrollment: paulkelly@gs.edu.

Dr. Paul Kelly met with Baptist Collegiate Missionaries this spring to discuss the value of theological education.

Photo by Jesse Stephens.

Hawaii Team Serves in Colorado Wildfire Recovery

By Gay Williams, Hawaii Pacific Disaster Relief Co-Director



Since June 29, one of the largest wildfires in Colorado history has swept through Pueblo County, and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams from seven states have joined Colorado Baptist Disaster Relief in serving residents of Rye, Colorado City, Beulah, and Pueblo. An HPBC team deployed July 21 through August 3, including disaster relief directors John and Gay Williams of Hawaii Kai Church, Cheryl Sanders and Al Baron of Waialae Baptist Church, Steph Funtanilla of Eleele Baptist Church, and Tom Adams of Hamakua Baptist Church. Our volunteers cleared burned debris, cut damaged trees, sifted ashes for surviving treasures, and offered a comforting word to homeowners facing overwhelming loss.

(left) HPBC and other volunteers sift ashes in search of surviving treasures for a Pueblo County homeowner.



GracePoint Mililani Returns to Tokyo for Seventh Year

by Lisa Tamura-Tanoue, mission team leader

GracePoint Mililani sent 22 team members to Tokyo June 22–July 4 for their seventh Japan mission trip, and years of relationships with pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders bore fruit.

Dividing into subteams, they hosted a Hawaii party, taught children's English classes, and led children's church at Bread of Life Church, where James preached from Acts on "When You Don't Know What's Next." At Okubo Baptist Church, they prayer walked and distributed flyers for the Kids Summer Lunch Program. At Grace Garden Church, they helped launch the church's first multi-day Kids English Camp, sharing home through worship, lei-making, loco moco, teri chicken, mac salad, and haupia.

Others met students at Waseda and Tokyo University, served ministries for trafficked children, the marginalized,



the elderly, and immigration detainees, and hosted the Together in Grace Retreat for ministry families.

Worship was offered in English and Japanese. The gospel was shared, and the team followed the Spirit's lead. Praise God!

James Shiroma is lead pastor.

GracePoint Hosts "Refresh" Women's Conference



GracePoint Church held its annual "Refresh" Women's Conference on August 8, 2026. Julie Shiroma taught through portions of Genesis and shared from the life of Sarah, encouraging women to trust God and remain faithful through every season of life. The women who attended were encouraged and refreshed through a meaningful time of teaching and fellowship.

(right) Julie Shiroma teaches at GracePoint's Refresh Women's Conference on Saturday, August 8, 2026.



University Avenue Returns to Alaska

University Avenue Baptist Church sent a team of 11 to Anchorage, Alaska, this July to serve with Quest Alaska in partnership with Greater Friendship Baptist Church (GFBC) at Fairview Park. The team led a Bible club at the park and assisted GFBC with community outreach, including hosting a neighborhood luau. Dani Beth Crosby, UABC's Family and Communications Minister, led the team.

Photo: UABC mission team with their ministry host, Brenda King, of Quest Alaska.



Olivet Baptist Celebrates 100 Years

Olivet Baptist Church marked 100 years of ministry in Honolulu over the July 4 weekend, beginning with a community birthday picnic on Saturday that welcomed neighbors for a meal, activities, and the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. The celebration continued Sunday with an anniversary worship service that included

a look back at Olivet's history, personal testimonies, hula, music by Bob Bennett, and a message from John Brady, retired Vice President for Global Engagement with the International Mission Board.

Jamie McElrath is senior pastor.



Hatchel Returns Home to Serve GracePoint

GracePoint Church in Mililani welcomed Anthony Hatchell as its new Youth Pastor on June 1, 2026. Anthony brings a deep love for Jesus, a passion for discipleship, and a desire to reach the next generation with the gospel.

"We are thankful to have Anthony and his family back in Hawaii," said James Shiroma, GracePoint Church's lead pastor. "We believe God will use Anthony to impact the next generation and be part of our commitment to reach our community and the nations with the gospel."

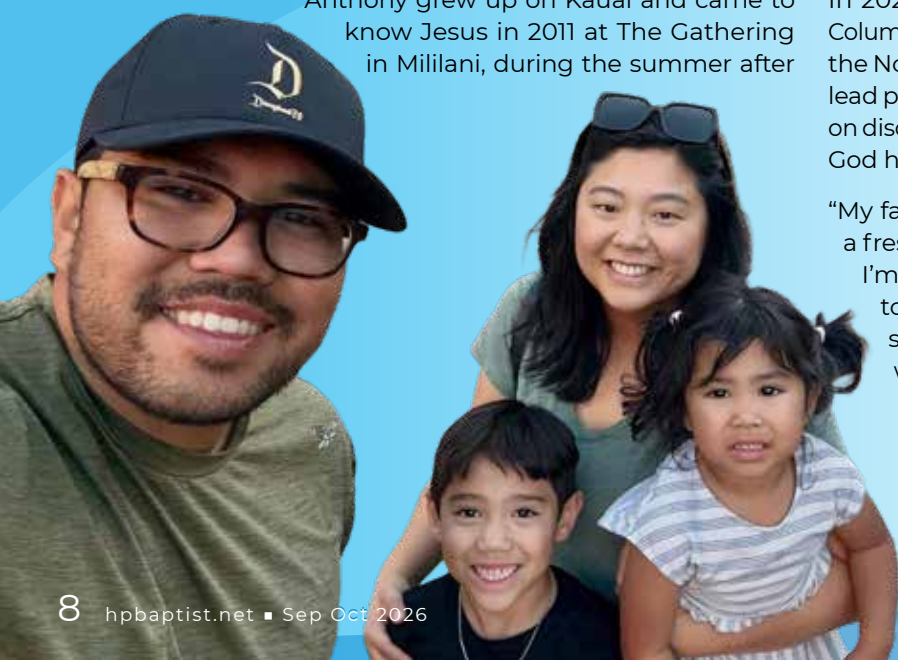
Anthony grew up on Kauai and came to know Jesus in 2011 at The Gathering in Mililani, during the summer after

graduating from Kapaa High School. At The Gathering, Anthony was discipled, sensed God's call to full-time ministry, and met his wife, Danielle. They now have two children, Aiden and Charlotte.

While attending Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Anthony served as an associate pastor at International Baptist Church of Arlington, focusing on youth, college students, and discipleship.

In 2021, the Hatchells moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, where they planted Grace City Church through the North American Mission Board. Anthony served as lead pastor of a multicultural church with an emphasis on discipleship, outreach, and community engagement. God has now brought them back to Hawaii.

"My family and I have experienced God's kindness in a fresh and powerful way since returning home, and I'm incredibly grateful that He has called me back to pastorally serve the next generation," Anthony said. "God is doing more in this generation than we could ever imagine, yet it is increasingly clear that there is much work to be done to advance the gospel among Hawaii's youth."





Calvary International Bangkok featured in Baptist Press

Baptist Press has featured Pastor John Blackmon and Calvary International. Planted by Southern Baptist missionaries in 1958, the only Southern Baptist church in Thailand and is now home to five language congregations. August marks four years since the Blackmon family arrived. Don't miss this great article by Scott Barkley of BPNews.



To view this on Baptist Press website, visit: tinyurl.com/BP-Calvary-Intl or scan this QR code.

Haleiwa Holds Archery Day Camp

In partnership with HisPins Archery Ministry, First Baptist Church in Haleiwa conducted an Archery Day Camp. The 30 participants learned archery safety, practiced daily, and competed in an end-of-week tournament. Mike Procter is the Transitional Pastor of FBC Haleiwa.



Valor Church Hosts Community Baseball & Cheer Camp

This summer, Valor Church partnered with its sending church, First Baptist Church of Forney, Texas, to host a Baseball & Cheer Camp for kids in their community June 15-19, 2026. Thirty-one volunteers made the trip from Forney to serve alongside the Valor team, and 175 children participated across the two camps. The week concluded with a Party in the Park that drew about 500 people from the surrounding neighborhood. Craig Coppenbarger is pastor of Valor.



Sent to Lead

Collegiate missionaries stepped into leadership, missions, and service this summer

by Julia Haggard, Baptist Collegiate Missionary

Last issue, I introduced the Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) Residency—the leadership pathway Arjay Gruspe, HPBC’s Director of NextGen Ministries, launched in 2024 to develop young leaders theologically, sharpen them as leaders, and mobilize them for mission. This summer, that pathway moved from the classroom to the field.

Baptist Collegiate Ministries sent three teams out of Hawaii—to Seattle, Flagstaff, and the Navajo Nation, and to Portugal—and, for the first time, campus missionaries and staff led all of them. Arjay describes it as “Equipping next generations to lead mission trips by training them, meeting with them, and then sending them to lead in an unfamiliar context. One campus missionary staff member ran pre-trip training for all three teams. Follow-up is happening now, so

what students learned this summer is becoming part of their character and ministry this fall.

Twelve more students and campus missionaries went to Collegiate Week in Oklahoma, joining 1,700 students and leaders from across the country. They returned home connected and ready for the semester.

There were salvations this summer, local churches were strengthened, and young leaders now know what it costs and what it yields to lead others on mission. The momentum continued as a BCM team from Louisiana Tech arrived on August 20 to serve during Welcome Week.

Please pray for these students as classes begin and for the campus missionaries and residents who will disciple them.



Collegiate Week: August 2–6 — twelve joined 1,700 students and leaders in Oklahoma



Arizona: July 21–August 1 — five served with Northern Arizona University Christian Challenge in Flagstaff and led VBS for First Baptist Tuba City



Portugal: July 19–August 1 — five served in Vila do Conde alongside missionaries Arbab and Leesa Khan.



Seattle: June 15–26 — nine served with North American Mission Board (NAMB) church planter Jonathan Lee, including a World Cup community outreach.

Missions Back at Center Stage

A Report from the 2026 SBC Annual Meeting

By Craig Webb

The last bit of "work" I did before my sabbatical began on June 12 was participating in the 2026 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, held in Orlando, Florida, on June 9–10. Now that we're on the other side of summer, let me share a few highlights.

It was a remarkable gathering — more than 20,000 people, including nearly 11,700 messengers, the largest crowd since just after Covid. What struck me most was the spirit of unity and the unmistakable return of missions to center stage. The highlight of the meeting was the International Mission Board "Sending Celebration," where messengers met 63 new missionaries headed to the field, and IMB President Paul Chitwood shared that the missionary pipeline has grown dramatically in recent years — by 500 percent.

Messengers also took meaningful steps to strengthen disability ministry across our churches and elected Willy Rice of Florida as our next SBC president.

You'll also want to know that messengers approved the "Truth and Unity Amendment," brought by Southern Seminary president Dr. Al Mohler, which states that a cooperating SBC

church does not affirm, appoint, or endorse a woman serving in the office or function of pastor/elder/overseer, specifically preaching to the assembled congregation.

It passed by a wide margin (roughly 75 percent), but as a constitutional amendment, it must be approved a second time by a two-thirds majority at next year's annual meeting in Indianapolis in 2027. This was the most discussed and highly anticipated moment of the two days. Messengers also approved a resolution on the same topic.

For those who'd like to go deeper, I've prepared a document with my own analysis of the amendment and its implications. You'll find it, along with links to full coverage, at tinyurl.com/mohler-analysis.



Illinois Baptist Photo 2026 SBC Annual Meeting



VBS

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Compiled by Dawn Akutagawa

Nu'uaniu Baptist Church - Oahu:

This year's **Wisdom Quest**, held at Nu'uaniu Baptist Church, showed God's faithfulness through every prayer, volunteer, and activity as children discovered that He generously gives wisdom. Please continue praying that the seeds of faith planted this week will grow as each child treasures God's Word. Chris Morales and Johnny Hom are co-pastors.



Waikoloa Baptist Church - Hawaii Island:

Waikoloa Baptist Church had an incredible VBS week with a mission team from First Baptist Church Tupelo, Mississippi, transforming the church into **Rainforest Falls** with creative decorations and activities. The week averaged 64 children, reached 72 on the final night, welcomed nearly 200 people for Family Night, and celebrated a record number of children reciting memory verses. Trent Thompson is pastor.



Vacation Bible Schools were made possible with the support from NAMB grants.

Kona Baptist Church - Hawaii Island:

Kona Baptist Church's annual VBS welcomed 39 children, averaging 34 each night—the highest attendance in five years. Through Bible stories, music, games, and crafts, the children learned that **Jesus is the Light of the World**, while families heard the gospel during the closing program. Brian Frable is pastor.



Valley Isle Fellowship - Maui:

Valley Isle Fellowship held its VBS during the last full week in June 22-26, 2026. Over 50 volunteers came together to make this a successful time for children to learn about Jesus and how **Jesus is the Light of the World**. Nick Love is pastor.



Cornerstone Christian Fellowship - Hawaii Island:

Cornerstone Christian Fellowship had more than 60 kids at VBS this year. They were blessed to have help from an Oklahoma church mission team led by our former WMU director and Disaster Relief directors, the McCains. Dr. Jeff Buchholz is pastor



Lahaina Baptist Church - Maui:

Ocean Commotion, this year's VBS at Lahaina Baptist, was held June 22-26. College students from Cedarville University helped with the Vacation Bible School. More than 60 children heard about Jesus and how much he loves them. Eric Naylor is pastor.



These two pages feature only six of the many HPBC VBS stories! Please send a great group or action photo and description to dawn@hpbaptist.net for the NOV/DEC Pacific Connector.



by President Shane Tanigawa

The HPBC Executive Board met on August 14, 2026, at our Honolulu offices with members joining both in person and via Zoom. Hawaii (Big Island), Maui, Molokai, Oahu, Kauai, Japan, and Thailand Churches are represented on our board this year.

Financial Health & Stewardship

The board received an encouraging midyear financial report — Cooperative Program giving is running 9.1% ahead of last year, income is ahead of expenses, and our 2025 financial statements received another clean audit opinion. You can read the full picture in “Good News at the Midpoint” on the next page. The board approved a 2027 budget for presentation to the messengers at the November 19–20 annual meeting.

Investing in Future Leaders

The Programs Committee brought recommendations that were approved, awarding theological initiative scholarships to three new students and nine renewing students for the fall semester, with students studying at Gateway, Southern, Southwestern, Southeastern, and Midwestern seminaries. These scholarships are made possible by your gifts to the Sue Nishikawa Offering for Hawaii Pacific Missions — a direct investment in the pastors and leaders God is raising up across our convention. Thank you!

Strategic Ministry Advancement

Executive Director-Treasurer Craig Webb reported that Dr. Paul Kelly, the new director of the Gateway Seminary’s Hawaii Pacific School of Theology, arrives this month (Aug. 17), with fall classes launching on the HPBC campus as well as in Hilo and on Maui. He also shared encouraging updates on the Shiraki Foundation scholarship partnership, on three pastors traveling with our International Mission Board trustee, Pastor Ikaika Higa, to Richmond, Virginia, this fall, and on the completed renovations at the Keeaumoku house.

Pu u Kahea Momentum

Two members of the Operations Committee visited Pu’u Kahea Camp and Conference Center and reported on the great work that is happening. They noted a strong booking



2026 Executive Board Officers

left to right:

Karla Jennings (secretary) Kaunakakai Baptist, Molokai

Pastor Hanale Lindo (second vice president)
Kaunakakai Baptist, Molokai

Pastor Larry Hale (first vice president)
Eleele Baptist Church, Eleele, Kauai

Pastor Shane Tanigawa (president) University
Avenue Baptist Church, Honolulu, Island of Oahu

Craig Webb (executive director-treasurer) Central Baptist,
Honolulu

calendar and an extended Kamehameha Schools Preschool lease— a longtime tenant, a significant source of revenue, and a partner that cares well for the property. Last year’s capital improvements continue to pay off, and this year a replacement golf cart and a used vehicle were added to support the volunteer teams who make so much of the work at Pu’u Kahea possible. What was once a burden has become one of our brightest spots.

Board Committee Work

The board approved the 2027 HPBC calendar — including the new July 11 Disability Ministry Sunday — for presentation to the messengers. The Communications Committees asked that updated sexual abuse prevention resources be shared at the annual meeting and that disability and special needs ministry resources be added to the HPBC website. The Administrative Committee reported the completed annual review of the Executive Director-Treasurer and affirmed his leadership of the staff and the convention.



GOOD NEWS at the MIDPOINT: A Financial Update

Craig Webb, Executive Director-Treasurer, and Monica Kang, Director of Finance

Every quarter Monica and I sit down together with the numbers. This time we came away smiling — and the reason is you.

Through June, our churches gave \$545,257 through the Cooperative Program. That's \$45,574 more than this time last year, an increase of 9.1%, and it came from 90 churches — three more than a year ago. June was especially encouraging at \$75,612, more than half again what we received last June. We're about \$9,700 shy of our half-year budget, but giving has always leaned toward the second half of the year, so we're on pace to come close to our annual goal of \$1,110,000.

On the operating side, income ran ahead of expenses by \$27,267. Our approved budget expected us to be roughly \$52,000 in the red by now, which puts us about \$79,000 better than plan. A good share of that comes from our staff and ministry leaders spending carefully — personnel costs finished \$27,459 under budget — and not one church received less ministry because of it.

There's good news in our properties, too. Rental income keeps strengthening, and we're working with legal counsel on lease and insurance questions so these buildings serve our churches well for years to come. Pu'u Kahea's turnaround continues, with \$286,693 in income already — on pace to pass last year's full-year total of \$367,002. Restricted ministry funds now stand at \$865,416, up from \$778,091 at year-end, and our audited 2025 statements received another clean opinion.

Behind every one of these numbers is the faithful generosity of our churches. Mahalo. We're committed to careful stewardship as we keep working together to support pastors and their wives, strengthen churches, plant new ones, and carry the gospel across Hawaii and the Pacific.



Hawaii Pacific
Baptist Convention

Annual Meeting

TO **CHRIST** BE

GLORY

FOR **EVERY GENERATION**

NOVEMBER 19–20, 2026 • Thursday-Friday
Olivet Baptist Church, Honolulu

Shane PRUITT

National Next Gen Director,
NAMB



Dr. Jeff IORG

President/CEO,
SBC Executive Committee



Dr. Adam GROZA

President, Gateway
Seminary



**New for
2026**

**Saturday, November 21
Next Gen Equipping
Conference**

Ephesians 3:20-21

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.