
RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR NATIVE HAWAIIAN PRISONERS

WHEREAS, In response to Jesus’ teaching and the aloha of all people, the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes the inherent right of Native Hawaiians to practice their ancient and traditional religion as guaranteed by law and pledges its support to those Native Hawaiians;

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiian religious rites are protected under the Constitutions of the United States of America, the State of Hawai‘i, the State of Oklahoma, the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 (42 USCS § 2000cc), and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (42 U.S.C. § 1996);

WHEREAS, the free exercise of religion for Hawai‘i prisoners at the Diamondback Correctional Facility in Watonga, OK, is making strides to provide minimal religious opportunities as required by law:

WHEREAS, inter-religious and interfaith spiritual accompaniment requires specific training, theological hospitality to different religious expressions, and a commitment to mutual respect of diverse belief systems;

WHEREAS, our local United Church of Christ churches and the Oklahoma United Church of Christ `ohana (family)—qualified, trained and ordained advocates now have access;

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiian prisoners are 6,000 miles from their homeland, `ohana and religious leaders; and that up to 2,500 Hawai‘i pa`ahao are located in correctional facilities in Oklahoma, Arizona, Mississippi, and Colorado;

WHEREAS, spirituality, and its diversity of practice, is an essential part of rehabilitation;

WHEREAS, Native Hawaiian prisoners through the Native Hawaiian Religion and Culture Group have requested advocacy, support, and pastoral presence at weekly spiritual gatherings and specific holy day observances;

WHEREAS, the Native Hawaiian prisoners’ United Church of Christ kūpuna (elders) and kahu (pastors) have commended their `ohana to the care of Oklahoma area United Church of Christ clergy; and that some of the pa`ahao (prisoners) are sons and `ohana of our own churches in the Hawai‘i Conference United Church of Christ;

WHEREAS, the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches United Church of Christ of the Hawai‘i Conference United Church of Christ is in covenantal relationship with all the settings of the United Church of Christ;
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ recognizes the inherent right of Native Hawaiians to practice their ancient and traditional religion as guaranteed by law, and pledges its support to those native Hawaiians;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches’ Justice and Witness Team to work in partnership with the Hawai’i Conference’s Witness Missional Team, and the Oklahoma Association through the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference to coordinate efforts and ministry with the Native Hawaiian Religion and Culture Group of the Diamondback Correctional Facility in Watonga, Oklahoma to minister to the Native Hawaiian and other Hawai’i prisoners;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the five associations of the Hawai’i Conference United Church of Christ as well as the Hawai’i Conference Board of Directors to join in this ministry to native Hawaiian prisoners, especially those who are in continental facilities far from Hawai’i;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ urges the leaders in the Hawai’i State Legislature and the United States Congress to call upon the Department of Public Safety in Hawai’i and the Department of Corrections in Oklahoma to recognize the need to uphold the laws of the Constitution of the United States of America to allow Native Hawaiian prisoners in all the continental United States facilities and the State of Hawai’i the freedom to exercise fully their religion in a non-hostile and non-retributive environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls on the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches United Church of Christ through its Pāpā Makua and Luna Ho’yomalu and the Conference Minister and Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Hawai’i Conference United Church of Christ to urge the Department of Public Safety of the State of Hawai’i to provide for routine visits from practitioners of Native Hawaiian spirituality;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages through its Justice and Witness Ministries and the Hawai’i Conference United Church of Christ through its Witness Missional Team to call upon the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) to insure religious freedom for those who practice non-Christian religion with adequately trained professionals and open the faith pods to include interfaith groups.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Twenty-fifth General Synod of the United Church of Christ encourages and supports the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches United Church of Christ to work in concert with the Oklahoma Association United Church of Christ and the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference UCC, the Native Hawaiian Religion and Culture Group, the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM), the Justice and Witness Ministries of the UCC, and other peace and justice networks of the United Church of Christ to provide advocacy and financial support to expand the witness for religious freedom for all Native Hawaiian prisoners throughout the United States of America.

The implementation of this resolution will be by the Justice and Witness Ministries’ Human Rights, Justice for Women, and Transgendered Ministry—especially Criminal Justice and Human Rights, the Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches of the Hawai’i Conference United Church of Christ and all its settings, the Oklahoma Association of the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference United Church of Christ as all its settings, and all other interested settings of the United Church of Christ.

Funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and funds available.