



Views of the Vision

The Ministry of Gay and Andrew Hongo

December 2018

Website: www.rghongo.com

Email: rghongo@hotmail.com

MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS *By Gay Hongo*

It's hard to believe that 2018 is drawing to a close, and that it's been almost a year since Randy went home to be with the Lord. It has been a big adjustment learning to live and minister on my own, but I am learning again the truth of that wonderful scripture Lamentations 3:22,23. I'd like to share with you how God has been faithful in allowing me to continue my ministry. Here are some recent highlights.

Back in June, I received an invitation from Pastor Barbara Tengan at the Wailuku Faith in Jesus Church on Maui for their 70th Anniversary Celebration. I thought to myself, "I don't want to go without Randy," and just threw the invitation aside. But then the Lord reminded me of how faithful Pastor Barbara and her church had been to our ministry for so many years, and I needed to go -- not just to sing but to express my heartfelt gratitude.

When Pastor Barbara found out I was planning to go, she asked me if I would speak and sing. It hasn't been easy to adjust to being a solo act after 46 years of ministering with Randy. I feel very lonely singing by myself, because before I was always singing with Randy and sometimes with Andrew. Randy was the best accompanist I ever had. So I told Pastor Barbara, "I can sing but only a few songs. Maybe 10 minutes." She agreed and thought that would be a good idea.

So I flew to Maui for the event and enjoyed a wonderful celebration of God's faithfulness to that church. I had two songs prepared to perform with karaoke track. However, when the time came for me to share, I found out that I was the main evangelistic speaker and Pastor Barbara had given me 40 minutes to share. Randy could fill 40 minutes at the drop of a hat, but I had never ministered impromptu for that long on my own. Thankfully, the Lord helped me and brought to mind all the wonderful ways He had been at work in my life, and I was able to share those experiences with the congregation. Also, Andrew had prepared a video clip of Randy's Celebration of Life service which made the people laugh and cry.

Presenting Pastor Barbara Tengan with a koa cross made by Kalihi Union Church for Wailuku Faith in Jesus Church's 70th anniversary. I was their keynote evangelistic speaker for youth outreach -- my first big concert without Randy or Andrew.



One thing I shared that evening was that earlier that same day, Pastor Barbara, Maiko Nakano (my assistant), and I went to visit an elderly Japanese-speaking woman from their congregation named Mrs. Hino, who was in a nursing home. We didn't know how alert she would be, but when I started singing Jesus Loves Me in Japanese, and Mrs. Hino started singing along -- so loudly she was drowning me out! I sang that song about three times, as well as other Japanese songs and hymns that she loved. As we shared and sang together, I could see she was filled with the joy of the Lord. I was able to be the hands and voice of Jesus to her.



Singing Jesus Loves Me with Mrs. Hino.

Just as I was leaving, I saw Mrs. Hino's Filipino caregiver, and I wanted to thank her for her wonderful care. So I sang a Filipino song for her: Dahil Sa Yo. The caregiver sang with me, and said that song was very precious to her.

As I was sharing this story back at the church anniversary celebration, I sang the opening line from Dahil Sa Yo. I was only going to sing that one line, but I saw that there were many Filipino pastors there for the celebration, and they all started singing with me. So we sang the whole song -- and that off-the-cuff performance brought the house down.

I was reminded that if I depend on the Lord, He will give me the words to speak and the songs to sing. I'm able to carry on even without Randy because the Holy Spirit gives me exactly what I need, and brings to mind whatever He wants me to share. It was also a blessing to me, because I felt so much love from the people as they were laughing and crying with me, and together we experienced the joy of the Lord.

Another ministry highlight came when Andrew was home in August, and we went to sing at a Hawaiian church called Kalihi and Moanalua Church. I had wanted to go back and visit this church because they were the ones who were with me and Randy the day he passed away.

To explain how important this church was to Randy and me, I have to tell you about a prophecy we heard at the Hawaiian Island Ministries conference a few years ago. The prophecy said that revival was coming to Hawai'i through the indigenous Hawaiian people, especially through the youth. When Randy heard that, he felt called to work with the youth group at Kalihi and Moanalua church and began mentoring them and taking them to nursing homes to sing and share testimonies. We were scheduled to do one such concert at the Hawai'i Kai Assisted Care facility on December 16th, 2017, and as we were on our way to meet the youth group to sing, that's when Randy collapsed in the parking lot and went to the ER. I called the kids in my panic and said, "Uncle Randy has to go to the hospital, can you guys do the concert without us?" And they replied, "Sure, we'll do it." Later, I found out that at that point the kids looked at each other and said, "What we going do? Uncle Randy had the program!" But somehow, all the training Randy and I had given them came into play, and they proceeded to do all the songs, playing bass, ukulele, and guitar, and sharing testimonies and dancing hula. They ended up doing a wonderful job.



With the youth from Kalihi and Moanalua Church. Randy felt so at home with his fellow Hawaiians.

That day was the last time I had seen those youth and their families. I wanted to go back to tell them how much they meant to Randy, and how he would have wanted them to continue serving with their gifts. But it was important to me that Andrew go back with me, because not only does Andrew have his father's Hawaiian blood, but he also has a Hawaiian heart like Randy did -- very loving and full of aloha.

Andrew shared that Randy had such a special place in his heart for the Hawaiian people and their culture, and that he felt so at home at Kalihi and Moanalua Church -- it reminded him of his early days at Haili Church in Hilo. Andrew thanked that church for being with his father on the day that he passed into glory. There were many tears all around, tears of sadness and also of joy. I thank God for bringing some closure and healing to that painful event because of the love of the people of God.

I also continue to minister at our home church, Kalihi Union Church. They are very supportive of me as I get back into ministry at whatever pace I feel comfortable. I was also able to find some wonderful pianists to accompany me, including Lois Pannabecker, Ellen Suhl, Teresa Shelby, and Nancy Shim. I lead worship at the early traditional morning service once or twice a month with a small choral ensemble of Ray and Ellen Suhl and Marion and Vernon Von. I also coordinate dancers

with our worship team -- Sepe Ochoa's hula ministry and Ray Kishimoto's sign dance team. I also minister at Joy Fellowship, the ministry to seniors. That one I enjoy because my sisters go and they enjoy singing with me for that fellowship. I sang for Manna Ministries, which distributes groceries to those in need and hosts a worship service and Bible study for participants, led by Vivian Lovell. They're about 90% Filipinos so when I sang Dahil Sa Yo they all sang along, even the men who are usually very quiet and reserved.



Ministering at Joy Fellowship with the KUC hula team. To the right of me is good friend Harriet Furuya, visiting from California, who sang an Okinawan song for the occasion.



Ministering on Sunday morning at KUC with the hula and sign dance teams.



Our Legacy



With Kendyl (left) and Kelly (right) Pagaragan at the KUC Graduation Banquet. Sister Bailey (not pictured) also graduated.

I had a wonderful opportunity to see how the legacy Randy and I leave is already bearing fruit. We had a very special graduation celebration at Kalihi Union Church this past June. We honor all the graduates, but there were two especially close to my heart: Bailey Pagaragan, who just graduated from cosmetology school, and her sister, Kendyl, who graduated from home-school. They are the daughters of Jeff and Kelly Pagaragan. Kelly (formerly Kawazoe) was in our Kalihi Union Church youth choir, and Randy and I used Jeff and Kelly as part of the musical ensemble in many of our holiday shows. They moved to Sacramento to raise their family of five and years ago when we were touring Northern California they came and ministered with us. The kids danced hula in our program, and they helped us with whatever we needed. After the tour, they felt God calling them to full-time ministry, because they witnessed what it was like to be a ministry family, just as we had ministered as our own family for so many years with Andrew. The Pagaragans are now serving as full-time missionaries in Japan.

Anyway, back to the graduation celebration. Each graduate was presented with a gift from the church and a flower. Pastor Kendal Fong told the graduates, "If there's someone here that has influenced your life and you'd like to give this flower, you can pass it on." Kendyl gave me the flower and said, "You and Uncle Randy have influenced me to be what I am today, a missionary in Japan." I felt so humbled and thankful by how God used us.



Spiritual Lessons

This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4:10-11

Randy was such a wonderful spiritual leader for me, so now that he is gone I have to depend on the Lord even more to sustain me. But I am grateful for good Bible teaching at KUC. Recently we had a sermon series based on 1, 2, and 3 John. We were exhorted to love others as God loves us and to put that love into action through words and deeds.

One of the things I miss most about Randy was that he was very affirming to me. He would always compliment me on how beautiful I was, and what a good job I did whenever we sang and ministered. He would say, "Oh honey, I'm so blessed to have you as my ministry partner. You're so beautiful, your voice is that of an angel, and you do very well sharing with people and you have such a wonderful sense of humor" Randy was also very gifted at affirming and encouraging other people, too. After Randy's passing, many of our friends told me they miss him so very much because he took time to text and call them, to write cards and letters to encourage them. He made them feel like they were worthy of his time and concern and prayers.

I have to confess that for me, affirming and encouraging other people can sometimes be exhausting! There were times I felt so drained by the ministry and the needs of other people. However, after Randy's passing, I now realize that I am the one who so needs that sort of encouragement and affirmation. Because he's not around to do that for me, I have a new level of appreciation for other people when they compliment me or express their appreciation for what I do. I especially like when people laugh at my jokes and tell me I have a good sense of humor.

My loss has given me a greater empathy for people who need that word of encouragement or affirmation to brighten their day. I am learning to be more sensitive to the needs of others, realizing that I too have those same needs. I am called to love others because God loves me. I have also come to realize that it is okay to be a needy person because God wants me to need Him.

FAMILY AND MINISTRY PHOTOS



Rob and Linda Francis shared at KUC about their ministry to Muslim students at the University of Central Florida.



With Darin and Nancy Yamada and their daughters Maile (back row), Tiffany, and Karina. The whole family danced hula for our concert tours in Japan and California many years ago.



Solo dancers for musical Seussical put on at Waialae Baptist Church, directed by Chey Sanders. I attended to support these budding performers Faith Libarios (my niece Laurie's daughter) and Eric Toma (my nephew Riki's son).



KJ and Lori Kenfield were translators with Wycliffe Bible in the Philippines, but have roots here in the islands. They came back for a visit and reunited with old friends: (back row, left to right) Pastor Howard Yoshida, Tom Tanimura, Peter Galuteria, KJ Kenfield; (front row, left to right) Jeannie Furushima, Lori Kenfield, Donna Pacheco-Tanimura, Rachel Yoshida, Dr. Randy Furushima





My latest ministry is taking 22-month old Jonah Barrow out for playtime at least once a week to give his mom, who just had another baby, a break. (Jonah is the son of KUC Japanese Pastor John Barrow and his wife, Mayumi.)



On my trip to Maui, I met up with Hawaiian musical legend Emma Veary. She helped to found the lavender farm there and made sure they gave us free entrance and complementary scones and tea.



I had the honor of singing for the 25th Anniversary of Jesus Christ is calling You Ministries of Pastor Danny Yamashiro and his wife, Jamie.



A very special lunch in honor of our long-time friend and supporter, Lois McCracken. (Back row left to right) Deanna Aoki, Dottie Chong, Violet Kagawa, Lois McCracken; (front row left to right) Gerald Chung, Irma Miller. Lois, Deanna and Violet are residents of Craigside Retirement Home where they hosted our luncheon.



First Chinese Church had a special service to remember those who have gone home to be with the Lord. Jaci Chung and I lit a candle to remember the wonderful gift God gave us in Randy.

FROM ANDREW

The other day my close friend and former co-worker from NBC texted me: "Congrats, you won an Emmy!" I texted back: "Really? What story?" I hadn't even known I was nominated!

The story was about Barack Obama's farewell speech in Chicago, which we produced back in January of 2017. I was one of more than a dozen producers on the story, so my work on that story had faded into my memory -- and now that I'm in Alabama, no longer working at NBC, I didn't even realize the award ceremony was happening! But I certainly remembered the story. Not only was it an honor to take part in such a historic event, but it was probably the coldest shoot I'd ever been on in all my years at NBC.

Our job was to get beautiful drone shots of the Chicago waterfront. At sunset. In January. Which meant that the temperature was well below freezing, not to mention the bone-chilling winds off of Lake Michigan. Oh, and did I mention -- I had flown there unexpectedly from Hawaii, which meant I had surf shorts and tank tops, but no winter clothing. Thank goodness for Macy's.

But, of course, I'm grateful for the award, and give all the glory to God. Working at NBC was such a wonderful experience for me and shaped who I am as a journalist in so many important ways. I had been nominated for six Emmys prior to this, but this was my first win -- a lovely way to end a tenier at NBC that meant so much to me.

In other news, Meaghan and I are very much enjoying married life in Alabama. We had a busy summer: we bought a house, adopted a dog, and I learned how to mow a lawn. Meaghan continues to work long hours at the children's hospital, but she absolutely loves the kids; and I'm enjoying teaching broadcast news at the University of South Alabama. We love our church, Covenant Presbyterian, where I'm part of the worship team and we've found a strong community of fellow believers. We have a year-and-a-half more of residency here in Alabama, so please pray for us as we discern God's direction in the future after that.

It was a special blessing having Mom come to Alabama to celebrate Thanksgiving with us. Meaghan was working the overnight shift, so even though she's a wonderful cook, I told her to take a rest and let me and Mom do all the cooking. Mom baked a delicious pumpkin crunch, and I did the turkey and the gravy. I was very relieved it all turned out OK. Dad would have loved it.



Andrew and Meaghan were able to buy a house in Mobile, Alabama. We had a beautiful Thanksgiving together.

Thanksgiving is a particularly poignant time because it was Thanksgiving of 2017 when I last saw my father. He and my mom had come up to Alabama, and Meaghan's parents had come out as well, so we were all able to celebrate Thanksgiving together -- and I will never be able to adequately express my gratitude to the Lord for giving us that beautiful experience.

Happy Thanksgiving



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 9 - Kalihi Union Church, 7:15am worship service, 9am Japanese service

December 12 - Japan-America Society of Hawaii Holiday Party

December 13 - Joy Fellowship with Shinsato sisters and Sepe Ochoa's hula ministry

December 23 - KUC worship service, 7:15am

December 24 - KUC Christmas Eve Service, 5pm and 7pm

December 29 - The Plaza at Moanalua, 10am concert with Andrew, dancers, KUC youth group

January 20 - Makiki Christian Church, 7:45 and 10am worship service, 11:20am Japanese service

February 10 - Excel (Mililani Missionary) Church, 9am, with Lois Pannabecker



*Andrew and Gay minister in song at
Covenant Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Alabama*

Christian Vision would like to thank Pat Murakami for serving as our assistant bookkeeper for the last twelve years. Pat deposited checks, kept records, and sent out receipts. She also kept us accountable for making sure our spending aligned with the purposes of our mission. As a member of the board of missions at Makiki Christian Church, Pat was our advocate and liaison with her church. Christian Vision has thrived under Pat's dedication as she has used her God-given gifts of bookkeeping and organizational skills to help us. We are grateful to God for sending us Pat and her husband, Sanford, and for their labor of love.

God is calling Pat and Sanford to retire from Christian Vision to pursue other goals. Pat and Sanford, we wish you God's richest blessings as He leads you in your future endeavors. Mahalo from all of us at Christian Vision.

We thank God for answering our prayers by sending Chris and Machiko Aliipule to be our new bookkeepers. Machiko has much experience being the bookkeeper for her parents, Yuuichiro and Meiko Nakano, of Mount Olive Ministries.

New officers for the Christian Vision Board of Directors are:

Gay Hongo: Chairman

Gordon Lau: Vice Chairman

Daniel Miyamoto: Treasurer

Chris Aliipule: Secretary



*Gay sings with KUC Japanese Fellowship Choir at the Annual
Song Festival held at Makiki Christian Church.*

Christian Vision
P.O. Box 31124
Honolulu, HI 96820-1124

return service requested

PRSRT STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Kaneohe, HI
Permit No. 116

Merry Christmas

and a Blessed New Year
from the Hongo Family



*Gay, Andrew, Meaghan
and Boaz (aka Bobo-chan)*

Announcement: We are transitioning to an e-newsletter, which we will post on our website (www.rghongo.com) and also email periodically. If you'd like to be on this e-newsletter list, please email us at rghongo@hotmail.com. If you want to continue receiving a hard copy of this newsletter in the mail, please write back to us using the enclosed envelope. (If you already responded to this request, no need to do it again.)

Year-end donations for the general fund or the Hongo Music Center are much appreciated. You can also donate online at www.rghongo.com. Mahalo!