

Views of the Vision

The Ministry of Gay and Andrew Hongo
and Taylor Pagaragan

December 2021

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The Hongo Music Center is Here!



Gay and Shelley Ige teaching worship through music and dance in the room that will become the Hongo Music Center.



Left to right: Khloe, Jonah, and Elina. Six-year-old Khloe and five-year-old Jonah will begin piano lessons at the Hongo Music Center in January 2022.



Taylor Pagaragan playing piano and leading worship in the Hongo Music Center.

There's one particular "good work" at Christian Vision that began all the way back in 2001. That was when God gave Randy and me a vision to establish a music center in Kalihi. I'm so pleased to let you know that now, twenty years later, God is turning that vision into a reality.

In January of next year, Christian Vision will be opening the Hongo Music Center in partnership with Kalihi Union Church on the church's campus. The center will be located in a large, air-conditioned room on the Diamond Head side of the gymnasium. We have already started music classes there using a baby grand piano that was donated by Mae Ohama Chang. One of our Christian Vision board members, architect Robert Kishi, is designing an extensive remodel of the room, which will include sound-proofing and the installation of a large window to display a wall of donor tiles in the shape of a grand piano.

The Hongo Music Center will also make use of a smaller room on the second floor to be used for music lessons and as the Christian Vision office. This room will be air-conditioned and sound-proofed and will house a baby grand piano donated by Kris Robillard Humphrey of San Diego. In the future, we may also remodel this room to serve as a recording studio.

We are grateful to the Lord for each and every one of you that helped to turn this dream into a reality through your prayers and financial support. The donations you made are being used for building renovations, sound equipment, musical instruments, staff salaries, and student scholarships. We pray all of it will be for the glory of God.

As you may know, Kalihi is one of the lowest-income communities in the United States. If a student has a desire to learn, we want to make music lessons available even if they do not have the ability to pay. One example of a child who will benefit from our music center is a six-year-old named Khloe. Khloe loves to sing and dance and told us she wants to learn to play the piano. Her mother was incarcerated in a federal penitentiary from 2018 to 2019. During that time, she was raised by her grandmother. Khloe attends KUC with her mom and step-father. Through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, this family has a new direction in life.

Khloe will be one of our first piano students when the center launches in January 2022. Please pray with us that through the Hongo Music Center, children like Khloe will be able to find the joy of Christ and give their lives to the Lord.

"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus."

~Philippians 1:6~

CHRISTIAN
VISION

West Oahu Christian Church



The worship team at West O'ahu Christian Church.

This past June, Taylor Pagaragan and I went to minister at West O'ahu Christian Church at the invitation of our friend, Daniel Miyamoto. At the time, the entire Pagaragan family was here in Hawai'i on home furlough from missions in Japan, so we were all able to go together. Taylor sang and danced and gave her testimony. Taylor's sister, Kendyl, played the bass, and another sister, Reagan, played the cajon.

In addition to being Christian Vision's bookkeeper, Daniel is also a very talented musician. He sang with Taylor and me on the praise team, and then Daniel and I did a duet to Kanaka Waiwai. We were so blessed to have many beautiful hula sisters who joined in to dance to this beloved Hawaiian song: Audrey Hongo Adachi (Randy's first cousin), Kathy Watarai, Taylor, Reagan, and Kendyl.



I am always so blessed to be able to minister at West O'ahu Christian Church. They have been faithful supporters of ours for many years and have also become monthly supporters for the Pagaragans. The church holds a special place in my heart because it is in my hometown of Waipahu. It's also the last church that Randy ministered at before going home to be with the Lord.

The Gift of Evangelism

I recently participated in a Sunday School class at my church that focused on Erik Rees' book, S.H.A.P.E.: Finding and Fulfilling Your Unique Purpose for Life. The class taught us to find our divinely ordained path by discovering our Spiritual gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, and Experience. The class was led by Pastor Kendal Fong and Dr. James Kwong. Both are very good Bible teachers – and also very funny!

It was the first time I took a class with James, and I was very impressed because he's such a wonderful teacher. I had known him as a kid growing up with Andrew, and he was like a big brother to Andrew. One thing James said in our class was that God uses our unique backgrounds for His Kingdom purposes – even our ethnicities. James said, "I'm half Chinese, half Japanese. So I like a good bargain, but I also want high quality." I thought that was so funny.

Kendal shared that God used his past experiences for His glory, even though some of those experiences were difficult. Kendal got kicked out of both Iolani and Hawai'i Baptist Academy and ended up graduating from Moanalua High School. But those experiences humbled Kendal and helped him to be able to relate to kids facing various challenges.

I learned that God has given each of us spiritual gifts. Sometimes we don't even know we have those gifts, but other people may be able to see it in us. We broke up into small groups to share the gifts we saw in each other. Several people told me I have the gift of leadership and evangelism. I was surprised because I never thought of myself as having those gifts. All my years of ministry with Randy, he was always the leader and evangelist – and I was the worker bee in the background. I didn't feel I had any gifts in particular. But God was about to reveal to me the gifts He had given me.

One Wednesday, at our women's fellowship group, I was assigned to pray for someone who had a special need. It was Harry Abe, whose wife, Floria, was a long-time member of our church. Harry recently had a bad fall and broke his hip, and was placed in Maunalani Care Home. I felt led to pray not just for Harry's recovery, but also for his salvation.

I prayed, "Lord, please send someone to witness to Harry so he can accept Jesus Christ into his heart." And I heard the Lord say, "Gay, you go."

That word from God stuck in my mind. Plus, I thought back to the S.H.A.P.E. Sunday School class where people told me I had the gift of evangelism, and I thought, "Maybe they were right." So I called Harry's nursing home to make an appointment to see him.

Harry's brother-in-law, Dennis Santo, drove me to the nursing home, and I brought a batch of peanut butter cookies – Harry's favorite. I had also called Harry's daughter, Laura, to ask her what her dad's favorite song was. She said, "He loves country western." So I had printed out the lyrics to Sunshine On My Shoulder. When we arrived at the nursing home, they wheeled Harry out to meet me on the lanai.

I introduced myself to him and told him that I used to see him at church because he would bring his wife and drop her off, then come back to pick her up. Then I sang *Sunshine On My Shoulder*, which Harry just loved. He said he was so into country western music that he used to go to Nashville to hear country western bands. Floria didn't really like that music, so he would go by himself. Harry also reminded me that he and his wife had come to visit Randy at City of Hope in California when Randy was undergoing cancer treatment. I thanked Harry for his kindness, because Floria would always bring macadamia nut chocolates for Randy.

As we were reminiscing about Randy, I told Harry, "I really miss Randy, but I have so much peace because I know Randy's in heaven. I know that Randy is with Jesus because he received Jesus as his Lord and Savior." Then I asked, "What about you, Harry? Would you like to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior? So that you know for sure you'll go to heaven when you die and see Randy?"

Harry said, "Well, I'm not a church-going Christian like my wife is." I said, "Salvation has nothing to do with whether you go to church or not. It's all about Jesus Christ. It's all about how God gave His only Son to die on the cross to pay for all of our sins."

I explained that this is amazing grace – that it's something we don't do anything to deserve. We can't earn our way to heaven; it's just a free gift God gives us, if only we will receive Him. I said, "Harry, would you like to receive Him?" To my surprise, he said, "Yes." So we prayed together for God to forgive Harry's sins and give him the gift of eternal life in Jesus.

Then I sang *Amazing Grace*. The words were so fitting: "I once was lost, but now I'm found. Was blind, but now I see." I told Harry, "When you receive Christ, you receive the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is going to help you understand more about God and help you to understand the Bible." I said, "Harry you need to read the Bible now." He said, "OK."

Then I said goodbye, and I called his daughter and told her Harry had received Christ. She was so happy. I also told another friend from KUC, Patty Ching, about Harry coming to the Lord. And Patty said, "We've been praying for his salvation from 1989 when our young adults group met for Bible study at his house!" God is so faithful.

I didn't know I had the gift of evangelism. But I know that when God opens up the opportunity to witness to someone who needs to hear the Gospel, all I have to do is be obedient, and He will use me.



50th Wedding Anniversary



Randy and Gay
were married on
July 31, 1971
at
Kalihi Union
Church.



Left to Right: Joy Shinsato
Nakamura, Lynn Ogomori
Tsunekawa, Cheryl Toma
Sanders, Carol Fukunaga,
Gay, Randy, Calvin
Kaneshiro, Ron Narimatsu,
Sam Kekuna, David Johnson.



As July 31, 2021 was approaching, I thought to myself, "Hey, this would've been our golden anniversary because Randy and I were married fifty years ago. If Randy were here, I'm sure we'd have a really big celebration. However, it's very difficult to celebrate when Randy is in heaven and I'm here." I figured most people don't commemorate a 50th anniversary if one spouse is already gone. I thought it would've been nice if there were something I could do to commemorate this special day, but I resigned myself to just treasuring my memories on my own.

When the 31st arrived, Andrew called me and asked if I could join Skype with him and Meaghan. When I logged on, Andrew surprised me with a beautiful video montage he had put together, including video messages from many friends and family. One by one, they shared how much they were blessed by Randy and me ministering together as a couple. I was overwhelmed by all the wonderful memories given by dear friends we made through 46 years of marriage.

I would like to thank all of you who participated and sent in video messages. The memories you shared made me laugh and cry and filled my heart with joy. It was almost as good as if I had Randy here with me to celebrate 50 years. Andrew once met a woman who had lost her husband, and she said to him, "I'm still married. It's just that my husband is in heaven." I feel the same way. I'm so grateful to the Lord for not only blessing me with many years of a wonderful marriage, but also for promising that one day I will see Randy again, and we will worship God together for eternity.

I still cling to the words of Scripture inscribed on our wedding invitation fifty years ago, words that inspired Randy to write the song *When Two Become One*:

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart;
And lean not unto thine own understanding;
In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6



From Andrew: Mindfulness



Several years ago, when I was going through a number of life-changing transitions, I found myself struggling with a lot of anxiety. Through the church I was attending at the time, I was able to connect with a wonderful Christian therapist who helped me to bring the Lord into those places of fear and anxiety so that I could experience His healing.

I remember in one session, I seemed to get “stuck” on a particularly difficult memory. No matter how we tried to work on it, or re-frame it, or release it, I kept returning to it again and again. My therapist gave me a brief questionnaire, asking if this happened often. “Yes,” I told him. “Sometimes I’ll think of a thought that makes me distressed or uncomfortable, and I’ll obsess about it for hours, even days. I try as hard as I can, but I can’t let go of it.” My therapist told me that I might have a form of OCD – obsessive-compulsive disorder. It wasn’t that I was crazy or nuts. It was a chemical condition in my brain that meant I was really good at holding onto thoughts, but not great at letting them go (especially ones I found disturbing or painful).

At the time, it was both frightening and illuminating to hear this diagnosis. Illuminating, because it explained so much about my tendency to ruminate, over-analyze, obsess. Frightening, because it was scary to think about facing this disorder. But I also had a wonderful sense of peace, that the Lord was walking with me through this new challenge, and that He would be faithful to help me.

One practice that my therapist suggested to help me was mindfulness. It’s the idea of being present in the here and now, focusing on whatever is in front of us, rather than getting caught up in regrets of the past or fears of the future. For Christians, mindfulness can be tied to contemplative prayer: letting go of our thoughts and worries, and just focusing on being present to Jesus, right here, right now. For me, being in nature is wonderful for mindfulness. I love to take a hike with Jesus, and to be present with Him as I soak in the beauty of creation.

I’ve picked up a new mindfulness practice recently: furniture restoration. I know, I know. This is so not me.

Friends and family know that I love music, I love the outdoors, I love books and literature and culture. But a handyman I am not. Home improvement (even the littlest tasks) can baffle me, and I only recently used a power drill for the first time. Most squeaky doors or leaky faucets are better handled by my wife.

But we recently moved into a new house, and as I was looking for ways to make it a home, I found myself sucked into the world of YouTube DIY-ers (do-it-yourself-ers). They find old, beat-up, discarded furniture, and turn it into something not only usable, but beautiful. It’s a cost-effective way to get nice furniture, and it also keeps that old furniture from ending up in a landfill. I like that it’s a way to be good stewards of the resources God has given us, to reduce consumption and take care of the earth.

One project I did was refurbishing a wooden side table. I cleaned it thoroughly, sanded off the chipped finish, then re-stained and re-finished the whole thing. The wood grain is now beautiful, but I’m not sure it goes with anything else in our house, so we’re still trying to figure out what to do with it. Right now I’m working on a coffee table; the top is in pretty bad shape, so I’ll probably paint it matte black, but the side panels have a nice wood grain pattern, so I plan on using a warm chicory gel stain on that.

Yes, this is a new chapter for me. I didn’t even know what gel stain was a few weeks ago. But this hobby has not only been one of discovery; it’s been a meditative, contemplative practice for me. When I get overwhelmed with stress or anxiety (which I think is happening to all of us in this pandemic), sometimes it’s difficult for me to sit down and pray. But when I have a chance to work with my hands, to sand a tabletop or paint a coffee table, I find it somehow soothing. It calms me down, and as I work I sing worship songs or hymns. I think about the wood that I’m working on, how it came from a tree that God created, that grew over years and years in a forest somewhere. I think about what the Bible says about trees in passages like Psalm 1: that the man who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night “shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.”

And I think about how Jesus himself was a carpenter, that he worked with wood, too, making things that people would use every day, that would make their house a home. I feel His presence with me as I sand, polish, paint, and carve. It’s almost as if my garage workspace becomes a special place for the two of us to work together, to pray together. To be together.



Remembrances

ROSEMARIE CHUN



She is clothed with strength and dignity...
She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.

“Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all.”

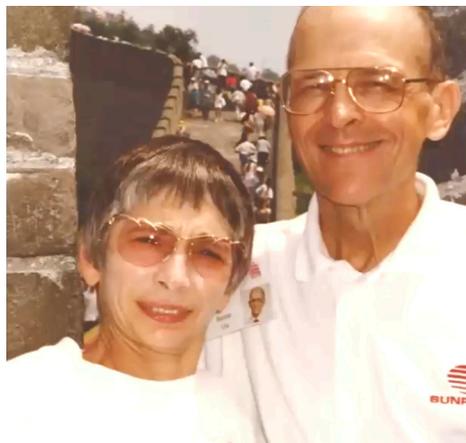
Proverbs 31:25-26, 29

On my last trip to visit Andrew in May, I decided to take a trip up to Camas, Washington to visit my friend, Rosemarie Chun. Rosemarie and her late husband, Leonard, were originally from Kalihi Union Church. They moved to different parts of the mainland but always kept close ties with us, inviting us to sing at their church wherever they were living, or driving long distances to attend our concerts as we toured the mainland.

So on this most recent visit, I was able to spend four precious days with Rosemarie in Camas. It was wonderful to fellowship with this dear friend who had always been such an inspiration and encouragement to me. Rosemarie loved the Lord and was faithful to study His Word every day. She was a powerful prayer warrior. After Randy passed, she would often text me a word from the devotional she was reading to encourage me even as I was grieving.

After our time together in Washington, Rosemarie and I flew to San Diego to visit another former KUC friend, Nancy Ogomori. Andrew and Meaghan also flew to San Diego to join us. Nancy and her daughter, Lynn Tsunekawa, and their family hosted a dinner for all of us in Oceanside. Little did we know that this would be the last time we would be seeing our dear friend, Rosemarie. But God knew and blessed us with this last joyous time together. Two months later Rosemarie came down with COVID and went home to be with the Lord.

BOB HICKS HAD A VISION



Christian Vision founders Bob and Betty Hicks.

Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he. Proverbs 29:18

In 1966 Bob Hicks was a professor of Speech and Communications at Hilo College on Hawai'i Island. Bob, on learning that one of his students, Randy Hongo, played piano at Hilo Hotel, went to hear him often. He and his wife, Betty, became Randy's biggest fans.

In 1980 Bob and Betty moved to Honolulu and found that Randy was now the music minister at Kalihi Union Church. So Bob and Betty became members of KUC.

Bob had a vision: to create a ministry that would enable Randy and me to share our music with the world for the glory of God. In 1982 Bob established this non-profit and became its first president; he named the ministry "Christian Vision." The first recording Bob and Betty produced was an album called "Lord of the Islands." It won the Na Hoku Hanohano Award (The Hawaiian Grammy) for best inspirational album of the year. In the years following, we produced 14 more recordings and won this award six more times.

I learned so much from Bob and Betty – specifically, the value of being frugal! They said, "Whenever you record a song written by someone else, we have to pay royalties. So try to write your own songs." God used their frugality to inspire Randy to become a prolific songwriter, writing songs that have brought comfort and inspiration to many and glory to God.

Bob and Betty worked tirelessly to raise funds to support this ministry. Through their efforts and God's provision and grace, we began an evangelistic concert ministry that had a tremendous impact on people throughout world.

All this because Bob Hicks had a vision. He met an ordinary student in his class, but he saw him through God's eyes. He saw the musical gifts and the potential to accomplish extraordinary things for the glory of God. Bob is now in heaven with Jesus and his former student, Randy.

You can view Gay's video remembrances of both Rosemarie and Bob on our website:
www.rghongo.com.

Kanikapila in California



We first met Jack and Pat Tsuji more than thirty years ago at an annual conference for Japanese Christian churches at Mount Hermon in California. We kept in touch throughout the years, often staying at their home when we went to minister in Northern California, and our friendship grew. The Tsujis lived in Modesto for many years and just recently moved to Laguna Woods in Southern California. I told Pat that I wanted to come and visit her and Jack this November. As we were making arrangements for our time together, Pat asked if I would be willing to share my music with some of her friends. She thought it would be such a waste for me to come all that way and for her friends not to have the opportunity to hear me sing.

So Pat arranged a mini-concert and invited friends from her ukulele group, her hula halau, and her church small group. Some of them were Christians, and some were not yet believers. In fact, Jack was ministering to some of the men they invited, holding Bible studies with them on the book of John to introduce them to Jesus. Also in attendance were dear friends Harriet and Kenny Furuya, who had driven me down to Laguna Woods from their home in La Crescenta (in Los Angeles). Harriet is a wonderful singer, and Kenny plays ukulele and sings as well.

The evening's program included solos by me in Hawaiian, English, and Japanese, but a lot of the music was what we in Hawai'i call "kanikapila" – everyone playing ukulele and singing and dancing together, a jam session. It was so much fun to play local favorites like "Kanaka Waiwai" and "Blue Hawai'i."

Whenever I sing, I always want to take the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, too. Pat had told me that one of the ladies in attendance had just recovered from back surgery and was in a lot of pain; she thought that a song Randy wrote, titled "Sufficient is Your Grace," would minister to her. So before I sang that song, I shared that Randy had written that song at a time in his life when he was experiencing a lot of pain and suffering during his chemo treatment.

God led him to II Corinthians 12:9-10:

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

I shared that God's grace is always sufficient no matter what trials we may go through, and that the ultimate gift of grace came when Jesus died on a cross to save us from our sins. I explained that grace is not something we deserve because of what we've done, but rather, something God gives us out of the abundance of His love for us.

I was so thankful for this wonderful evening to meet new friends from all different backgrounds. I am amazed that even though Randy has been gone for four years now, God still uses the songs he wrote to minister to people in powerful ways. To God be the glory!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Kalihi Union Church Family Christmas Drive-Thru

2214 N. King St.

December 10 & 11 (Friday & Saturday)

6-8pm

A family-friendly event. Drive through KUC's campus and see scenes of the nativity!

Honolulu Christian Church

2207 O'ahu Ave.

December 12 (Sunday)

8:45am – Japanese Service

10:45am – English Service

Gay and Taylor will do special music.

Kalihi Union Church Christmas Eve Services

2214 N. King St.

December 24 (Friday)

3pm, 5pm, 7pm, 9pm, 11pm

Gay and Taylor will lead worship in 3pm service only.



Merry Christmas

PHOTO GALLERY



Gay continues to lead worship at the 7:15am service at KUC twice a month with her faithful praise team members.



Taylor and Lisa Lee have taken over leading worship whenever I need to take time off. They're gifted and anointed musicians who really love the Lord.



Taylor used her graphic design and computer skills to create a beautiful display for KUC's annual missions fair.



Jack and Keiko Marshall were missionaries in Osaka, Japan. We had a wonderful reunion at KUC's Japanese Fellowship 25 years after we first met.



The Women's Fellowship Ohana are great prayer warriors. We praise God for many answered prayers – including Harry Abe's salvation.

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Announcement:

I plan to retire from full-time ministry with Christian Vision on June 30, 2022. I will continue to be president of the Board of Directors and provide leadership for the ministry, but day-to-day operations will be taken over by our staff.

We are grateful for your years of support. As we make this transition, there are still many needs. Please prayerfully consider the ways you can continue to give if you choose:

1. General Fund. This will go toward the operational expenses of the ministry (salaries, technical support, office administration), as well as a pension for me.
2. Hongo Music Center. We have completed raising funds for the building, so further gifts are now being used for programs and scholarships.

Feel free to email us at rgongo@hotmail.com if you would like to transition from the hard copy of this newsletter to our e-newsletter.

You can also donate online at www.rgongo.com. Thank you for your support, prayers, and partnership as we serve the Lord through Christian Vision – to the ends of the earth!