

REFLECTION ON THE 81ST GENERAL CONVENTION

By The Ven. Steven Costa, Deputy

In the months and weeks preceding General Convention, we began the process of gathering the flowers, and other supplies needed to weave a lei of Aloha (Love) we knew was our Kuleana to bring with us to Louisville. We prayed about the many legislative and administrative details of our obligations as Deputies representing the Diocese of Hawai'i and the wider church. I knew our more detailed nā hoa hanau (cousins) of our deputation would give more attention to this area of our kuleana, so since I am not a detail person, I'm a big picture (nui ki'i) kind of guy, I will speak of the vision I had been given by my ancestors (kupuna) to share this Lei of Aloha with our brothers and sister coming together in Louisville.

As so often happens, the Holy Spirit (Uhene Hemolele) dropped flowers of our Lei of Aloha into place. We made beautiful yarn lei, for all our deputation to both wear and to gift as the Holy Spirit (Uhene Hemolele) so moved us. It's been tradition, that we decorate our Hawai'i stanchion, usually following the theme of our Diocesan efforts, at putting forth certain resolutions we felt would further ke Akua's kingdom here on earth as in Heaven. So, it seemed a no-brainer that Queen Lili'uokalani, Lahaina, and Ola I ka Wai would somehow have to be incorporated into our theme. So, the Hawaiian Madona and Child from Holy Innocents was selected, a beautiful rendition of Her Royal Highness Queen Lili'uoukalani was also selected. I saw during Pentecost at the Cathedral, flowing ribbons, that represented the fire of the Holy Spirit. So, we searched out some blue and white flowing ribbon to represent the waters of Life. As we gathered there on the first day of General Convention, I felt the energy and enthusiasm of the collective members rise to the surface and their collective vision wove yet another flower of our Lei of Aloha.

In the preceding months and weeks prior to General Convention, I had been in long term chemotherapy treatments for the bladder cancer that has been a thorn in my side for 17 years. Knowing my obligations (Kuleana), I worked with ke kauka (doctors) on timing my treatment sessions so I could be on my 3-month rest cycle a few weeks prior to going to General Convention.

On the lā Pule preceding our leaving, I was asked to attend the closing Ceremony of Fest Pac at UH. One of the 'anakē was coughing throughout the ceremony. Well sure enough a few days later I had this scratchiness in my throat. I did my best to mitigate any ma'i, but to no avail. By Wednesday (Pō'akolu) I was not feeling well (pono).

Thursday (Pō'aha) I managed to get into see my PCP (ke kauka) he gave me some antibiotics and cold tablets and reminded me to mask and wash my hands frequently (holoi ka lima I ka pinepine) and sanitize often. I almost didn't go. But everything was already in place. So, I sat quietly, prayed and meditated and sought the counsel of my wife. So, we left.

We got there; I was getting pretty ma'ī (sick). I knew how the calendar of events unfolded. So, I invited Rev. Jenn to sit on the floor in my place while I rested. She dove right in. It was one more of the many flowers (nā pua) in the lei of Aloha, we were inspired to weave and share with General Convention.

I was invited to participate in the multi-cultural Eucharist on Wednesday (Pō'akolu) kakahiaka and read part of the prayers of the people in 'Ōlelo Hawai'i. I was so fortunate to be with Elder Rev. Leon Samson who shared from his native Lakota language, along with several others, mostly in varying Spanish dialects. One more flower in the Lei of Aloha. Over the course of several days, I connected with our indigenous cousins (nā hoahanau). Nā poe (the people) were always gracious and enthusiastic to connect with indigenous Hawaiians ('ōiwi Hawai'i) and always had wonderful memories to share. One more flower in the Lei of Aloha. I was particularly moved by Elder Rev. Leon's beautiful rendition of the four corners prayer. Like we do in our Hawaiian Ceremony. Honoring ke Akua's creation, to the East, then to the West then to the North and to the South. All around us beauty. One more flower in the Lei of Aloha.

Rev. Kaitlin had expressed her desire to get off the floor on Friday (Pō'alima). So, it was my first full day of legislative duties. It was an incredible opportunity to experience the Holy Spirit ('Uhane Hemolele) at work. We welcomed our brothers and sisters of Micronesia into the Diocese of Hawai'i. We shared in the exhilaration of the joining of both Michigan and Wisconsin into larger whole Dioceses. More flowers in the Lei of Aloha. By Akua's grace we were very blessed to have all of Hawai'i's resolutions adopted. From Peace in the Holyland to Ola I Ka Wai and Creation Care to our receiving into fellowship Micronesia. But most significantly Her Majesty Queen Lili'uokalani moving one step closer to Sainthood in our church. The completion of the lei of Aloha was being with my brother and sister Deputies, who worked tirelessly and allowed the grace of God (Akua) to shower us with love. So that we in turn could share the lei of Aloha at General Convention.

Me Ke Aloha Pumehana. Ke Akua Pū. Iesū Pū, Kiakona Nui, Steven+