



Kawaiaha`o Church

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THE FACTS ABOUT KAWAIAHA`O'S MULTI-PURPOSE CENTER PROJECT

Now that the Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR) and the Department of Health (DOH) have given Kawaiaha`o Church approval to resume construction on its Multi-Purpose Center (MPC) and the Circuit Court has denied the request for preliminary injunction that would have prevented construction, the Church has announced its intentions to resume work on the MPC project. This has led to discussion in the news media and elsewhere about the project and its possible affect on burials as work commences.

Unfortunately, some of these discussions have generated a considerable amount of misinformation and confusion, which the Church believes should be addressed. It is important that everyone in the congregation and the native Hawaiian community, as well as the community at large, know all the facts and have an accurate understanding of the decision making and planning that have taken place, not to mention the extraordinary efforts made to protect and malama any iwi discovered.

We believe when the community, including those who are directly associated with Kawaiaha`o Church and others, understand how critical the MPC project is to the future of Kawaiaha`o Church, its mission and the range of benefits the MPC will provide, they will better appreciate why it is so important the Kawaiaha`o Church complete the MPC.



The Kawaiaha`o Church Multi-Purpose Center

A Brief History of Kawaiaha‘o Church

Familiarity with the history of the Church makes it possible to better appreciate the significance of today’s events. Likewise, the history of construction at the Church since its founding helps to illuminate the MPC project. In 1820, Queen Kaahumanu, realizing the need for a fresh outlook for her beloved people, approved the request of early Christian missionaries to establish a Church near the springs of Kawaiaha‘o.

Soon after the Stone Church was completed in 1840, King Kamehameha III deeded the property for the Church and housing of the missionaries to Church members, and from that time, the Church and its attendant cemetery existed. It was not until 1837 that construction began on the existing sanctuary. The existing Church was dedicated July 21, 1842.

There are historical precedents for moving burials to accommodate the growth of the Church and the fulfillment of its mission. Under the leadership of Rev. William Kamau, Kawaiaha‘o’s second Hawaiian Kahu, and with the support of the congregation, Likeke Hall was built partially over the known cemetery to allow for expansion of the Church’s facilities in 1940. Prior to construction, 117 sets of remains were relocated.

Decision to Replace Likeke Hall with a New Multi-Purpose Center

The decision to construct the MPC was a result of years of discussion and thoughtful planning by Kawaiaha‘o Church congregations to address its current and future needs. Kawaiaha‘o Church is a living Church whose facilities are used on a daily basis. The need for updated facilities dates back to the tenure of Reverend Abraham Akaka. And in 2002, a survey of the congregation was conducted that confirmed their commitment to fulfil Rev. Akaka’s vision for a new facility that would allow the Church to grow and flourish to more effectively serve Ke Akua and perform its stated mission.

Accordingly, a Master Plan Committee was created, and it was determined that, given the needs of the Church, including classrooms for Sunday school, facilities for kupuna to have classes, an archival library, certified kitchen, improved administrative facilities, and expanded parking facilities, that the best course to follow was to replace Likeke Hall. Then in 2004, the congregation voted to move forward with building the MPC to replace Likeke Hall.

In 2006, however, the original project plan was scaled back to abandon the underground parking facility and redesigned to ensure that the Kawaiaha‘o Sanctuary would remain the highest feature on the site, as well as to minimize excavation and control costs. The revised plan was submitted to the State Historic Preservation Division which subsequently approved an archaeological monitoring plan for the project. In coordination with SHPD, all excavation was limited to areas in approved plans, with on-site archaeological monitors.

Measures to keep Kawaiaha‘o ‘Ohana informed and develop culturally appropriate protocols to address any inadvertent discoveries iwi kupuna

The Church, established a Nā Iwi Committee, comprised of volunteers from the congregation and cultural experts from the community, who assisted in establishing culturally appropriate guidelines and protocols to manage the care of any iwi that might be discovered during construction.

A year before the beginning of the project, the Church initiated an ongoing effort to keep the families with loved ones in the cemetery informed about the project and its status. This process began with our first Kāhea I Nā 'Ohana (call to the families) on May 27, 2006, which was advertised in the state's daily newspapers and Ka Wai Ola o OHA.

The families, who attended the Kāhea, as well as those responding to the publications, were notified of all subsequent Kāhea. We have held a total of eight (8) Kāhea I Nā Ohana between 2006 and 2009. Our eighth Kāhea was held on July 20, 2009, after the Church voluntarily stopped construction. The eight Kāhea were attended by approximately 150 people. Many of the families who attended the Kāhea had loved ones buried at Kawaiaha'o cemetery.

The Kāhea provided an opportunity for Church officials, including Kahu Curt Kekuna, the Kawaiaha'o Church Nā Iwi Committee, and members of the Board of Trustees to provide information about the MPC to the Kawaiaha'o 'Ohana and anyone concerned about iwi or the cemetery. Discussions were held regarding the demolition of Likeke Hall, the start of construction, discovery of iwi kūpuna during the construction, the state's determination that Kawaiaha'o is a cemetery, and the lawsuits that were filed against Kawaiaha'o over the discovery of the human remains. We appreciated all those who participated in the Kāhea.

Iwi Discovered

In 2009, the archaeologist retained under the approved archaeological monitoring plan discovered human burial remains during trenching. All work was stopped in the immediate area and buffers were immediately installed to protect the area. In compliance with the approved archaeological monitoring plan, the State Historic Preservation Division was called to verify the discovery and determine the appropriate disposition of the iwi kupuna that were discovered. This process occurred with each subsequent discovery. In total, 69 sets of remains were discovered at which point, Kawaiaha'o Church voluntarily halted work to consult with SHPD on the future direction, given the unexpected discoveries of iwi.

Those iwi discovered were handled with special care, respect and prayer; wrapped, placed in lauhala baskets and curated in a secure location within the sanctuary. Kawaiaha'o Church contacted families who may have had burial plots near the locations where the iwi kupuna were discovered. Some families agreed to the relocation rather than to preserve them in the utility trench.

Kawaiaha'o Church will honour the iwi kupuna by reintering them on site with an appropriate memorial after all iwi have been recovered, in consultation with the congregation and families who have loved ones buried at Kawaiaha'o. During the eight Kahea, while there were some families who disagreed with the course of action, the majority of families have been supportive of Kawaiaha'o's efforts; and in fact, some signed letters of support. Once all excavation has been completed, the area under the new Multi-Purpose Center and utility improvements will no longer be designated as a cemetery. This is intent of the DOH permit.

Kawaiaha‘o Church Is a Christian Cemetery

As the Church has always maintained, and as has been generally understood in the community for generations, Kawaiaha‘o Church Cemetery is a Christian cemetery not a Native Hawaiian burial site. In accordance with their faith, the members of the Church have prayed for the iwi that have been recovered, and as has been demonstrated, the Church does take its kuleana or stewardship responsibility of iwi kupuna very seriously. While the members of the Church are saddened that iwi were discovered, as Christians, we believe the spreading of the gospel and the glorification of the message of Jesus Christ is paramount and that this effort must proceed forward.

In the Christian faith, it is believed that when a person dies the soul does not remain in the body but ascends into Heaven where God prepares a room for everyone. As the King James Version of the Bible, *Genesis 3:19*, reads, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

For those who have questions about the project, the Church’s efforts to care for iwi kupuna or any other related matters, another Kāhea will be held on February 8, from 5-8 p.m. in the Kawaiaha‘o Church Sanctuary to provide a status report on the project and address any questions and concerns that attendees may have. We hope all those who are interested will attend.

Mahalo for your support of our efforts and may ke Akua bless you.