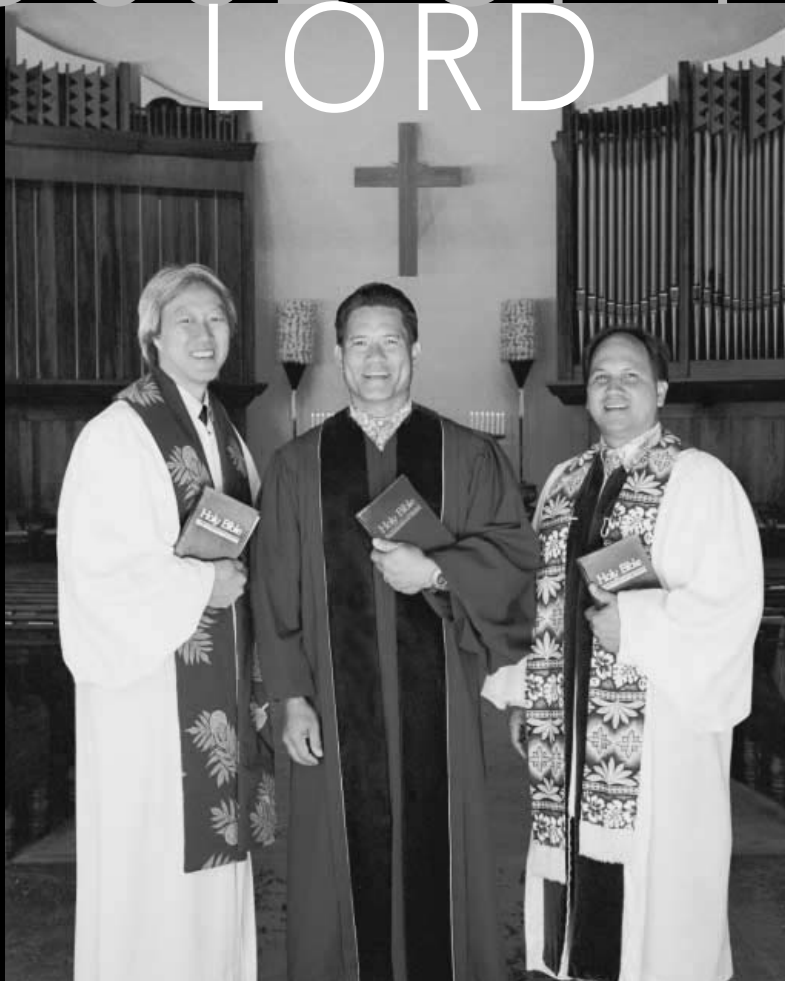


# IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD



CAMPUS CHAPLAINS

KALANI WONG '74, CURTIS KEKUNA '66


AND KORDELL KEKOA '80

ARE SERVING THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE

KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS 'OHANA

“WE WANT A BROAD-MINDED, CHEERFUL MAN  
WHOSE EVERYDAY LIFE AND PERSONAL INFLUENCE  
WILL BE WORTH MORE THAN PREACHING.”

– CHARLES REED BISHOP, 1897



Though Charles Reed Bishop spoke those words regarding the selection of a school pastor more than 100 years ago, his influence is still being felt at Kamehameha Schools today.

With the choice of **Curtis Kekuna** to serve as Hawai'i Campus *kahu*, each Kamehameha Schools campus now has a minister to call its very own.

In August, Kekuna joined Kapālama Kahu **Kordell Kekoa** and Maui Kahu **Kalani Wong** as Kamehameha chaplains tasked with producing “good and industrious men and women grounded in spiritual and Christian values.”

They are men of God – and men who fit Bishop's description perfectly.

## THE PASTOR'S SON

Although Kekoa is following in the footsteps of his father, (Solomon “Hotch” Kekoa, a pastor with Kailua's Church of the Nazarene) it's not the path he thought his life would take.

“I really didn't want to be a *kahu*,” he said.

“I wanted to be an F-15 fighter pilot. I was accepted into the program, but I had Bell's palsy (a temporary paralysis of the face) and ended up being disqualified.”

After earning a degree in business administration from Point Loma College, Kekoa was hired by Kamehameha as a substitute K-12 teacher in 1989. Two years later, he accepted a full-time position teaching Christian education in middle school.

“It was after that first full-time year when I really felt the call of God to go into the ministry,” Kekoa said. “I knew that teaching our Hawaiian children about God was where I was supposed to be.”

Kekoa returned to school, and now carries a master's in divinity from International College and Graduate School. He replaced the retiring **David Ka'upu '51** as the Kapālama chaplain in September of 2001.

Kekoa leads a program which includes Christian education classes for elementary and middle school students, Ekalesia (church) classes for high school students and regular chapel devotionals for all students.

“Our goal is to take every Kamehameha student and educate them about the love that God has for them, and to let them know that this love is so incredible,” he said. “We also want them to know that the God that Princess Pauahi loved is the same God who loves them.”

“One thing we don't do is try and change students into another type of religion. We don't try and make our students Protestant. We just want them to learn to love God.”

A person who exudes warmth, friendliness and humor, Kekoa also oversees Kapālama's Deputation Team, which takes students out into the community to serve Hawaiian churches.

“People don't realize that our Deputation Teams were really the first outreach program of Kamehameha Schools,” Kekoa said. “In the 1940s, Rev. Desha realized that there were a lot of Hawaiian churches that didn't have *kahu*, so he took our students out to these churches and gave them an opportunity to share. It's a program that began then and continues today.”

Besides keeping an open door to provide counseling for students, faculty, staff and administrators, Kekoa also takes care of ceremonial services at the Bishop Memorial Church, where he is assisted by Deacon **Sherman Thompson '74** for events like weddings, funerals and blessings.

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- KAHU KORDELL KEKOA

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Kekoa is often called upon to represent Kamehameha Schools in the O'ahu community, where he has blessed homes, buildings and even the KHON-2 newsroom.

"We get called a lot because people know that Kamehameha is a very spiritual place," he said. "We get to bring God's light, and it's one of those really important things we do to put Kamehameha in a positive light in our community."

And though he still keeps model airplanes on his desk, Kekoa seems content in his role as a Kamehameha Schools *kahu*. "I love our Hawaiian kids, and I love to see them succeed. What we're all trying to achieve here is well-rounded Hawaiian children who have good feelings about themselves and their faith.

"I know I'm where God wants me to be. People look at me with reverence sometimes, and I tell them 'Hey, I'm just like you.' I just get to speak on God's behalf, and it's a privilege to be God's vessel."

## THE MAUI MINISTER

Even though he's originally from O'ahu, Wong is most at home on Maui.

After graduating from Fuller Theological Seminary in California in 1987, Wong served for five years as associate pastor at Kahului Union Church. He's also been a parish associate with 'Iao Congregational Church for the last 10 years, a position he still holds.

It was through his involvement with the Maui community that led Kamehameha to ask Wong to bless the new permanent Maui Campus when it opened in 1999.

From there, Wong served as a volunteer Kamehameha chaplain, holding chapel services with students in 2000 and 2001. On July 1, 2002 Wong was selected as the full-time Maui Campus chaplain.

A former two-time Maui County manager of the year (Department of Parks and Recreation and Department of Housing and Human



Concerns), Wong's organizational skills suit him well as he formulates the school's Christian education program.

"With our program, we try and make sure that the students have a general understanding of the Bible, of who God is and who Jesus is, and how the Holy Spirit works in their lives," Wong said.

"When you have Christian education in school, versus just in church on Sundays, the whole peer situation changes, and kids feel free to be themselves and express their values. Kids want to grow and find out who is this God that they keep hearing about in different ways. And we want them to feel that this campus is a safe place to come out and express that interest."

A sincere, hip *kahu* who is often reminded by students that he may be in need of a haircut, Wong's goal is to have three interrelated communities on the Maui Campus.

The first is a worshiping community, where students learn how to worship and praise God, and connect their daily life with their spiritual life. The second is a learning community, which includes studying the scriptures and traditions of the Christian faith. Third is a caring community, where it's not enough to just know God, but challenges students to examine how they are serving God and their community.

"The most important thing for our students to know is that they can have a personal faith in God - that He is with them 24 hours a day. And that by having a personal relationship with God, their lives will be enhanced with so much joy, the pressures they face will be a lot easier to get through, and the life they'll lead will be much fuller," he said.

Wong said he intertwines Hawaiian and

Christian values in his teachings.

"I see a lot of the Hawaiian values reflecting Christian values, and vice versa. For example, *aloha* is the love that God has for us and the love we should have for others. *Kuleana* – there's a parable of the tenants that speaks to 'What are we doing with our gifts and our abilities?' – and that's a *kuleana*, or responsibility aspect."

Wong's closeness with his students is extremely evident. He realizes his role model status, but wants no special acclaim. "It's good for the kids to see that the minister is not someone you put on a pedestal. I want to be seen as someone who goes through the same struggles day in and day out as they do, but that I have a faith that grounds me and enables me to find security.

"Hopefully, they'll want to have that as well, and be a part of a faithful relationship with God."

## THE KAMEHAMEHA VETERAN

Although he is the institution's most recently hired *kahu*, Kekuna is certainly no stranger to Kamehameha Schools.

In 1973, he was hired as an intermediate dormitory advisor at Kapālama, where he used his relationships to help set up a Young Life chapter at the school. A Christian outreach program directed at youth, Kekuna eventually worked his way up to Young Life regional director for Hawai'i and Alaska, a position he held until four years ago.



He also spent more than 20 years as an assistant to Ka'upu, holding service as a football chaplain and aiding with ceremonies at the Bishop Memorial Church.

Raised on Maui, Kekuna said the person he admired most as a child – besides his father – was Rev. Abraham Akaka, who was at Kahului Union Church.

But it was an incident that occurred while attending Whitworth College that led Kekuna down his life's path. "My life was pretty confusing," he said. "I knew I wanted to do good things, but the choices I made, and the people I chose to be around usually helped me to get into trouble."

So much trouble that Kekuna found himself occupying a jail cell one night.

"I found that it was not the kind of place I wanted to be, and if I didn't start to make better choices, that's the direction I was headed toward."

After some deep soul searching, Kekuna said he had a "life-changing, significant encounter with God," and committed his life to following Christ.

He graduated with a degree in political science, then went on to Fuller Theological Seminary, graduating in 1973.

"When I came back in 1973, my passion was to reach as many teen-agers as possible and give them the opportunity to choose *ke Akua*, the one who has loved them since they were conceived," Kekuna said. "That was and still continues to be my whole goal in life. And the best way to accomplish this mission was to introduce them to the same person who had given me structure, guidance and direction – our Lord Jesus Christ."

On board as the Hawai'i Campus chaplain since mid-August, Kekuna is just beginning to get a feel for his new job. But he's already crafted out his role.

"My job is to give spiritual direction to the campus, including the educational aspect of Kamehameha Schools. The job includes being there for the faculty and staff. I don't see it as just being here for the kids – they're our priority, and that's why I'm here. But I see myself as a minister of the campus."

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– KAHU KALANI WONG

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– KAHU CURT KEKUNA

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A confident, self-assured man who booms enthusiasm, Kekuna is one of six presenters involved with the Hawai’i Campus character education program, called Ke Ano o ka Liko Lehua o Kea’au (the nature, or character, of the lehua blossoms, or students, of Kea’au).

“I love to be with the kids, and I’m presenting character education from God’s perspective, or from a spiritual perspective. We’re trying to teach kids to build a character resume, because who they are inside will determine who and what they do on the outside,” he said.

When speaking of the mission ahead of him, Kekuna quotes from Matthew 22:37. “It’s my goal for every child here. For all of us ‘To love the Lord our God, with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul and all our strength.’

“That’s what I pray for these students when they walk away from this campus, and that’s what I believe I should be about. If we are able to get these students to love God everyday, and see this as a lifestyle, then I would pronounce us successful in our mission.”

And though creating a Christian education program for an eventual K-12 school may seem like a daunting task, Kekuna is secure in the job that lies ahead.

“I don’t consider this a job,” he said simply. “I get to love God and the people who are here. That’s not a job - that’s my passion.”

#### KAMEHAMEHA SCHOOLS CHAPLAINS

Silas P. Perry 1898-1901

William B. Elkin 1901-1903

John L. Hopwood 1903-1917

Ernest E. Youtz 1917-1918

Edwin T. Sherman 1918-1924

Frederic B. Withington 1928-1935

Donald W. Bailey 1934-1935

Paul W. Baker 1935-1936

Lauren A. Sheffer 1936-1937

Davis M. Simpson 1937-1940

Vern E. Leahey 1940-1944

Stephen L. Desha Jr. 1944-1950

John F. Mulholland 1950-1969

George Thilking 1969-1971

David K. Ka’upu 1971-2001



## SEPARATE YET TOGETHER

All three Kamehameha Schools *kahu* display a mutual respect for one another.

“I was on the committee to hire both Kalani and Curt,” Kekoa said. “Kalani has a great rapport with the kids, faculty, staff and administration - he just has a nice, easy spirit about him. He also has a great relationship with the Maui community, and that’s something that the *kahu* really needs to have.

“Curt has a lot of vibrancy and energy. He’s a very open man, and I know he’s opened his own home to students who were having trouble. He’s very talented at getting people involved with his programs, and I think he’ll do well.”

“It’s exciting to be a chaplain at this time,” Wong said. “The three of us are all alumni and we all have this energy to want to serve the school. As we’ve connected, we’re understanding each other’s differences and strengths, and also respecting the direction each of us is taking at our own schools. But we’re also looking for ways to bind us together as one.”

Kekuna said he has nothing but admiration for his co-workers in Christ. “They are both outstanding, gifted men of God,” he said. “They’re called to their campuses to bring the good news of Jesus Christ, and I’m proud to call them my colleagues.”

Charles Reed Bishop would be proud of all three as well.