

2020

BISHOP'S AWARDS

BIOGRAPHIES



California-Pacific Conference
The United Methodist Church

Pre-Recorded
on
Sunday, May 16, 2021
Christ UMC of Honolulu
and
Saturday, June 5, 2021
First UMC of Pasadena

A horizontal row of twelve black diamond symbols, evenly spaced, representing a sequence or a set of items.

Ceremony Broadcast at Annual Conference on June 19, 2021

Each year during Annual Conference, Bishop Grant J. Hagiya celebrates a list of distinguished clergy and laypersons who have devoted their life of extraordinary service to the California-Pacific Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Recipients of the 2020 Bishop's Awards

Rev. James Conn
Connee Freeman
Phil Freeman
Dan Gara

Lorraine Kadooka
Rev. Etuini Kelemeni
Tupou Seini Kelemeni
Rev. David Richardson
Ana-Haydée Urda

2019 Recipients

Rev. Faith Joanne Conklin
Kenneth Ellis
Rev. Edward A. Hoffman
(posthumously)
Rev. Dr. Woong-Min Kim

Rev. Kenneth E. McMillan (posthumously)
M. Tyler Pottenger
Tetsu Tanimoto
George Williams

2018 Recipients

Francis Fukumoto
JoAnn Yoon Fukumoto
Howard Hudson
Rev. Dan Kennedy
Rev. Nancy G. Self

Rev. Dr. Robert Smith
Rev. F. Thomas Trotter
Rev. J. Irwin Trotter
Rev. Mark C. Trotter

2017 Recipients

Rev. Dr. John Cobb, Jr.
Gaunnie Hardin Dixon
Becky Haase

Stephen F. Harbison
Byron Hayes, Jr.
James M. Lawson, Jr.

Reverend James Conn

Rev. James Conn retired from active ministry after serving as the Director of New Ministries for the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church. His work included starting new churches, revitalizing old congregations, and developing leadership and resources for those tasks.

Previously, he served as the Urban Strategist for the Los Angeles Area of the United Methodist Church, where he helped congregations enhance the civic life of neighborhoods and encouraged economic self-development. He continued this work as an emeritus member of the National Teaching Faculty of the Asset Based Community Development Institute. In Southern California, he remains active with Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) as a board member and activist on behalf of justice for low-wage workers.

For 22 years he served as the founding minister of the innovative "Church in Ocean Park" – one of the first "postmodern" congregations in the nation. During that time he was twice elected to the Santa Monica City Council, including two years as Mayor. He founded a dozen projects including a community center, a runaway house for teens, a shelter for battered women, a nursery school for at-risk families, a network of democratic, grass-roots neighborhood associations, and a progressive local political organization.

He chaired the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, a joint powers agreement of Los Angeles City and County to develop public policy addressing homelessness region-wide. He chaired the County Homeless Coordinating Council and represented the protestant faith community on the County Local Board of the Federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program.

He graduated from the University of California at Santa Barbara, and holds advanced degrees from the Claremont School of Theology in religion and culture and from Occidental College in urban studies done in conjunction with the CORO Foundation.

He is married to Ms. Susan McCorry. Her daughter holds a Ph.D. in psychology and his son mixes music and manages a special event company.

Connee and Phil Freeman

Phil and Connee Freeman were born, raised and married in St. Paul, Minnesota. They moved to Los Angeles with their two children in 1964. The education credentials for Phil include a B.S. in Business Administration, a certificate from Pacific Coast Banking School, and a California Real Estate Brokers' License. The credentials for Connee include a B.S. and an M.S. in Business Administration, UCLA Executive Management Certificate and a California Real Estate License. Connee's professional work experience includes Associate Dean, UCLA Student Employment Office and Executive Officer to the UCLA Administrative Vice Chancellor. Phil's professional work experience includes Bank of America as Operations Officer, Loan Officer and Branch Manager, and at Mitsui Manufacturers Bank as Vice President Manager.

Before relocating to Los Angeles, they both were raised and very active at St. James AME Church where they were married. They joined Wilshire UMC, a historic edifice that houses the Multicultural English Ministry and Korean congregations, after their children attended Sunday School there with some school friends. Soon they became active in the church's programs. Phil held positions as Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Administrative Council, and Connee as Chair of the SPRC, Coordinator of the Membership/Hospitality Program and as contributing editor of the Visitor Newsletter staff.

In 2003, Phil and Connee were selected to serve as Co-Lay Leaders of the Los Angeles District, now known as the West District Union. Their major goal was to hold quarterly meetings with the local church lay leaders in order to provide opportunities for networking, training and information sharing. They also regularly visited churches in the Los Angeles District, and, together, served on the UMMLAD Board of Trustees, Board of Congregational Development, District Committee on Ordained Ministry, the annual Leadership Conference Planning Team, Lay Speakers' Committee, Urban Ministries Committee and Nominating Committee. They also participated on the LA Plaza Cultural Museum Fundraising Committee, the Epworth Housing Project for youth 18-24 years old, and assisted the District Superintendent at his/her discretion.

In 2012, they were appointed as Co-Lay Leaders of the California-Pacific Conference and worked closely with the District Lay Leaders and their Associates in order to assist them in empowering the local church Lay Leaders and develop communication vehicles for effective information sharing. They also worked closely with the Bishop. In addition, they served as officers on the Jackie Joyner-Kersee Community Foundation.

Connee and Phil are blessed with two terrific children, both of whom are married to wonderful spouses. Their daughter, Dawn Freeman Canada, is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker at Children's Hospital and works specifically with abused children. She lives in Stevenson Ranch, California, with her husband, Adrian.

Brandon, their son, graduated from USC School of Music and now plays the bass in the combo that accompanies Sabriana, a very popular Latina singer who tours the U.S. and Europe. Phil's and Connee's son, Phillip III, is a financial advisor after playing professional football with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for several years. He and his wife, Mia, live in Tampa Bay, Florida. The Freemans and Canadas refer to themselves as "The Magnificent Seven!"

We are blessed beyond any words can convey and are also very grateful to God for all of the opportunities He has given us to serve Him together!

Dan Gara

Early Life

Dan Gara was born in Pekin, Illinois on February 4, 1946 and raised in Madison, Wisconsin and Arcadia, California. While at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, Dan asked Katherine to join his folk music group. They quickly fell in love and decided to marry in August of 1967, transfer to the University of Wisconsin, and face the future together even if Dan was drafted into the military.

Family

Dan's marriage to Rev. Katherine Gara for 33 years was a joy that changed him forever until her death from brain cancer in February of 2001, and her ministry legacy continues to change the lives of others today. They had three boys, Sean, Joel and Mike.

As many in the Annual Conference followed and grieved Katherine's death, many then celebrated Dan's healing and resurrection in love found with Rev. Debbie Gara who had lost her husband to ALS shortly before Katherine's death. As Dan has often said "The joy and love of Debbie in my life has continued to change me in so many unexpected ways and multiplied God's blessings in my life beyond my greatest hope or expectation." New life began 19 years ago with their marriage and includes 2 daughters who joined the Gara boys, 9 grandchildren from 22 years old to 2&1/2, 2 daughters-in-law, and a son-in-law.

Business Career

Dan's financial career began with Caterpillar Tractor Co. and its Solar Turbines subsidiary in San Diego. He was in charge of international financing for customers in Europe, Africa and the Middle East, traveling extensively in those areas. Following 18 years at Caterpillar/Solar, he had a career as an investment banker and in mergers and acquisitions.

Local Church Ministry

Dan felt a call to ministry but decided the call was to ministry in the local church, the Cal-Pac Conference and as a ministry partner with his ordained wives. In 9 United Methodist churches, he has led annual bible study classes, sung in the church choirs, preached, chaired Church Councils and Adult Education committees, and led stewardship programs. He continues to build United Methodist mission schools in Zimbabwe, the last in January 2019.

California-Pacific Annual Conference

Dan's desire to combine his business expertise, and love for the United Methodist Church, resulted in his becoming the Cal-Pac Executive Director of Finance and Administration from December 1995 until September 2011 when he retired. He served two Bishops during his tenure and supervised accounting, receivables and payables, banking, payroll, human resources including pensions, all Cal-Pac camps, insurance, apportionments, and church loans.

His financial ministry at Cal-Pac was the high point of his financial/administrative career as he served Christ with his unique gifts. He loved personally interacting with local churches to interpret the ministries enabled by apportionment dollars and developed a Stewardship manual adopted by the United Methodist General Council on Finance and Administration for use with the denomination's local churches. Dan also **loved** interacting with the Conference staff, sharing concerns, joys and humor.

Western Jurisdiction and United Methodist denominational service

Dan is also proud of his contributions to the Western Jurisdiction and to the United Methodist denomination. He was the first elected lay delegate from Cal-Pac to General Conference in 2000 and 2004, and was also elected as a lay delegate to the 2008 General Conference. He served on the Jurisdictional Episcopacy Committee for 8 years and represented the Western Jurisdiction on the denomination's General Council on Finance and Administration for 4 years.

Lorraine Kadooka

Over the 43 years of working for the Methodist Church, I experienced a lot of change. We had to change how we answered the phone, from being a Mission of the National Division of the Methodist Church until 1967, when we became one of the Districts of the former Southern California-Arizona Annual Conference, to now the California-Pacific Annual Conference. Working with manual typewriters, then electric typewriters, then computers, as well as working with mimeograph machines, then copy machines, was challenging. Working in the office enabled me to meet many Bishops, Superintendents, ministers, and dedicated lay persons in Hawaii, California, Arizona, Guam, and Saipan.

My parents were Buddhist, and as a family we attended the traditional Buddhist services during the new years, and the memorial years of my grandparents. My parents were okay with me attending the Baptist Church down the street because it was convenient and something to do on Sundays. However, I was never a regular church-goer until I joined the Methodist Church a couple of years after I started working. I learned the in's and out's of the church from Dr. J. Wesley Hole and George Williams. They made it possible for me to attend Annual Conference after we became a district, and from then on I attended Conference as a staff person, District-at-large, and a representative from my local church. I also served on the Conference Board of Pensions, Equitable Salary Commission, Board of Ordained Ministry, and presently serve on the Rules Committee. I also served as the Disaster Coordinator while working, attended workshops sponsored by UMCOR, and was sent to Guam and Saipan after one of their many "super typhoons." After I retired I also went on a work team to Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina and saw first hand the church at work repairing, cleaning and rebuilding homes. Throughout the years, I witnessed the dedication of clergy and laity in their own local churches, as well as missions throughout the world. This selfless commitment motivated me to serve my local church throughout my working years and retirement.

My family always supported me throughout the years. My children Eric, Jo Ann, and Trisha were always willing to help me when it came to volunteering. My youngest daughter Trisha even forgave me when I missed her birthday every year because I was attending Annual Conference. My sisters, nieces, and nephews also willingly volunteered with me for the church throughout the years.

The work of the church is endless but rewarding and satisfying and I look forward to continuing my service in the years to come. *Aloha.*

Rev. Etuini Kelemen

Etuini (Eddie) Kelemen was born in Pangai, Ha'apai, in the island kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific. The first few years of his life was mostly spent with his maternal grandparents in Pangai, then after his elementary years, they moved to the main island of Tongatapu in order for him to continue with his schooling. Eddie finished at Tonga College in Tonga, then went on to Tonga Teachers' Training College to become a teacher. After two years, he then received a government scholarship to Ardmore Teachers' Training College in New Zealand to complete his teachers' certification. He went back to Tonga and taught at two elementary schools for a year, and finally ended up as a teacher at his old alma mater, Tonga College, where he remained until 1970, when he and his family migrated to Hawaii. Eddie felt the need to further his education, so for the next several years he successfully juggled being a professional student, and also being a husband, a father, a waiter, and a choir director.

Eddie arrived in Hawaii and enrolled at Maui Community College for one year before he transferred to the UH Manoa Campus in Honolulu in 1971. Eddie and his family left Hawaii in 1978, after graduating with his Masters in Political Science, heading to the University of Toronto, Canada for more study, by way of Salt Lake City, to visit with a high school friend. While there in Salt Lake City, he attended the First United Methodist Church of Salt Lake City, where a brand new fellowship of Tongan Methodists were worshipping. One thing led to another, and Eddie ended up directing their church choir. During his time in SLC, in the summer of 1979, Eddie answered his call to ministry, and the rest is history. Toronto seemed just like a distant dream, while Eddie was getting ready to move to Denver, where he would be attending seminary at the Iliff School of Theology, a United Methodist seminary.

After Eddie's first year at seminary, he was appointed as an intern pastor at St. Paul UMC in Pueblo, Colorado. The family was uprooted again and moved to southern Colorado, where their two daughters, Caroline and Alice, were later born, to complete Eddie and Tupou's family of five, three boys (Ngalu, Johnie and Jr) and two girls (Caroline and Alice). After Eddie graduated from Iliff, he was appointed to Adriance UMC on the north side of Pueblo, where he had been a student pastor while finishing up his degree at Iliff. The Kelemenis spent eight happy years in Pueblo, but God indicated it was time to move on. So, they packed up yet again and moved to Grand Junction, Colorado on the western slopes of the Rockies. Eddie pastored at

Redlands UMC for four years, until he was called in 1992 by Bishop Roy I. Sano, to serve as the District Superintendent of the Utah/Western District of the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Methodist Church. Eddie was the first Pacific Islander/Tongan to become a DS, and to this day there has only been one other. He was a District Superintendent for eight years, and then he moved back to Denver to be the Director of Ethnic Ministries while pastored at the Jefferson Avenue UMC in Wheatridge, Colorado.

While Eddie was itinerating within the Rocky Mountain Conference, and working his own local church, nationally he was active in the Ethnic Minority Local Church, attending and learning from the four national UM Caucuses, envisioning our Pacific people to be counted and to someday sit at the Table. He worked tirelessly to establish the Tongan-American Caucus, now known as the Kalia 'o Felenite Caucus, in the UM Church, and that finally happened in August of 1990. Having accomplished that feat, now there was the national caucus to work on. The countless phone calls and endless meetings with other PI and church leaders came into fruition at the General Conference of 1992 in Kentucky, where the Pacific Islanders National Caucus United Methodists (PINCUM) was officially voted in as the fifth Racial Ethnic Caucus of the United Methodist Church.

Tupou Seini Kelemeni

I was born in Nuku’alofa, in the island kingdom of Tonga in the South Pacific. I’ve been married to a retired pastor, the Rev. Eddie Kelemeni for fifty-two years, and we are blessed with five adult children, many grandchildren and great-grandchildren. It would be repetitive of me to talk about my husband in my bio, but in this instant, I must say that I was quite reluctant to enter into the ministry when he felt the Call. At the time, it would mean abandoning the goals that we had set for our growing family, but now, as I look back on how much more meaningful and fulfilling being in ministry was, I have no regrets whatsoever.

I grew up in Tonga and was raised in the Wesleyan tradition by my paternal grandparents. So when we decided to move to Hawaii where we joined the First United Methodist Church of Honolulu, I felt at home there. I joined the women’s group and became a UMW member when our unit was first chartered. I also sang in both English and Tongan choirs, and I still do to this day. Those were the church groups whose meeting times were compatible with mine, as I had a young child at home and was about to have another baby. To this very day, UMW and choir are still my life.

We left Hawaii in 1978 and moved to the mainland where Eddie was called to the ministry. Thinking back now, I realized that my life had always been steered around UMW and the choir. Every new church that we were moved to, the first groups I joined were UMW and the church choir. I have sang in many different parts of the choirs I joined and I have even directed a few of them, including a handbell choir and a children’s choir. As for the UMW, I have held many offices on the local level, district, conference and also on the national level. I was elected Vice President of the national organization from 2009 -2012, but prior to that, I was the first Pacific Islander and Tongan to be elected to the policymaking body of the United Methodist Women, from 2004 to 2008. I’ve also sat on the GBGM and UMCOR boards. At the moment, I’m still active in UMW and am my local organization’s president and the Tongan women’s president.

I am active in my local church where I am currently co-lay leader. I direct the English speaking choir and sing in the Tongan choir. I’m also involved in our Hawaii District, as I am currently the District Lay Leader. So, in lieu of my position as lay leader, I do serve on many committees on the district and conference levels. Since the corona virus pandemic hit, our UM Tongan National Caucus has not met in person, but I still serve as president. Serving my God through the church has been the experience of a lifetime, which I will cherish in this life and beyond.

Rev. David Richardson

In 2005 David Richardson finished his active full-time ministry of forty-one years in Pasadena, the city of his birth. Besides Pasadena First UMC, his other appointments were San Luis Obispo, Trinity Los Osos, Long Beach First, Northridge UMC, and District Superintendent. Four of those appointments required his efforts for major capital campaigns and for building or remodeling facilities and sanctuaries. His wife, Anne, retired in 2006 after 35 years of teaching, and they moved to Gig Harbor, WA. Married nearly 57 years, they have three children who live with their families in Washington, Texas, and Maryland.

Graduating from CST in 1969 with a Rel.D., David was licensed as a Marriage & Family Counselor (MFC) and served with several counseling centers while he served the local church. With Michael Emmons he authored, *The Assertive Christian*, and contributed to other publications. In addition, he has been an adjunct professor at Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), Cuesta College, Claremont School of Theology, and the Course of Study.

David's proudest accomplishments are found in his work as a founder and president of "People's Self-Help Housing" on the Central Coast of California, and a similar role he held at the Child Development Corporation of San Luis Obispo. His second appointment involved refugee resettlement. Trinity Los Osos UMC settled three Vietnamese Refugee Families between 1975 and 1979. In Long Beach his work was with Hmong, and Iu-Mien refugees. It then extended to Guatemala and Myanmar. He personally became quite expert in navigating the US immigration protocols, working with what was then INS and now ICE. The last family he helped settle was an Iraqi family sponsored by his church in Gig Harbor, WA. In all, David celebrates finding new life, safety, and security for more than 125 people. Refugee work also led him to work with Clint Rabb and the Board of Global Ministries to seek ways for GBGM to be at work in Vietnam and Laos. For David "hospitality" is one of the oldest and most valued Christian virtues.

In retirement David responded to Bishop Grant Hagiya's request to be his Special Assistant in the Pacific Northwest Annual Conference. This expanded when Oregon/Idaho was added to the new Greater Northwest Area, which included Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Alaska. When Bishop Hagiya was assigned to Cal-Pac Annual Conference, David was asked to follow. It added a much larger responsibility to his portfolio of work, because Bishop Elaine Stanovsky also asked him to stay as her Special Assistant at GNW. During these 12 years working for the bishops, David also served as a board member at the School of Theology in Claremont, chairing that board for three years. He was also on the Board of Directors for

Tacoma Community House, chairing the Centennial Celebration of this settlement house founded by the Methodist Women's Society with a primary mission for immigration rights and refugee settlement, education and citizenship.

His years of memories in ministry are filled with the faces of all the beloved people who have made ministry a joy over the years.

Ana-Haydée Urda

Ana-Haydée Urda was born on July 29, 1948, in Havana, Cuba. She studied at Colegio Buenavista, a prestigious bilingual school founded by the Women's Division of the Methodist Church. It was there where she had an early influence of the Methodist Church. She came to the U.S. on November 24, 1961, with her mother and brother. Her mother made the decision to leave Cuba due to political reasons.

Ms. Urda is a lifetime Methodist, and started her commitment to the Methodist Church in Cuba. When she arrived in the US, she continued to grow in the faith in Miami, Florida, and then continued it here in Los Angeles, CA. She joined Rosewood UMC in 1971 and in 2016 transferred her membership to Huntington Park UMC, where she is an active member.

Her discipleship experience as a youth and as a young adult is what influenced her to be the Christian woman she is today. Also, her passion to work with Hispanic Ministries grew on her during those years. Ana-Haydée is a natural leader for her character, her Christian formation, and her high work ethic based on honesty and hard work makes her who she is. During her lifetime, she has been elected, appointed, and employed to many leadership positions at different levels of the UM Church.

At the local level, she has served in many different areas such as: Treasurer, Lay Leader, Administrative Council chair, Trustee president and, treasurer, SPRC, Certified Lay Speaker, as well as other positions. At the district level, Ana-Haydée was the administrative assistant of the Los Angeles District Office for 19 years. She had the privilege of serving for five different District Superintendents, one of which was Bishop Grant Hagiya (eight years), our present bishop. Since 2018, she has been the UMW Spiritual Growth Coordinator of the West District and a Board member and Grant Committee member of the Living Into The Future Foundation of the West District.

At the Conference level, she has served in various capacities. She was elected in 2008 and 2012 as a Jurisdictional Delegate. She is a member of LAMAG (Conference Hispanic Caucus), and has served as Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. She is also the present chairperson of the Conference Hispanic Committee. She has also served in other conference committees, such as the Connectional Table, the Committee on the Episcopacy, and the Committee on the Status and Role of Women. In the UMW Conference Team, she served as Secretary of Program Resources, and the first (official) Spanish Language Coordinator in the Conference. She has also served as Assistant Dean and Dean of Mission U.

At the National level, Ana-Haydée has been Vice President, President, and Coordinator of Financial Resources and Administrative Support of MARCHA, the National Hispanic Caucus of the UMC. With the Women's Division she served in the Hispanic Consultative Group for eight years. She was a Board Member of Spanish American Institute for many years and served two four-year terms as a Board Member of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

Ana-Haydée is an unquestionably passionate disciple of Christ, and a valuable member of the United Methodist Church, who always advocates for justice and compassion for Hispanic/Latino causes.



