



2024 Bishop's Award Biographies

**Ceremony held at
The California-Pacific
Annual Conference**

**Friday, June 14, 2024
at 5:15 p.m. PST
Los Angeles Marriott
Burbank Airport**

PDF version: <https://www.calpacumc.org/ac2024/>

**BISHOP'S
AWARD**

QR Code:



As an annual tradition, our Bishops have honored
distinguished clergy and laypersons
who have devoted their lives to extraordinary service
to The California-Pacific Annual Conference

Bishop Dotte Escobedo Frank

2024 Recipients

Gloria Auburn
Rev. Dr. Bau Dang
Arlene Dempster
Winnie James
Albino “Al” Pineda
Natividad Torres Lagaso
Rev. Dr. Lydia Jackson Waters

2023 Recipients

Rev. Dr. Kimball Boyd Coburn, Sr.
Ruth Conley
Rev. Paul Hill
Rev. Thomas Hill, III
SongJa Park
Rev. Dr. Dale Smith
Betty Venegas-Huebner

2022 Recipients

Rev. Rex Britt
Patricia Coots
Rev. Sylvester Gillespie
Jacquelynn Hawthorne
Judy Lewis
Doug Lewis
Lori Meaders
Ellen Peterson
Alma Roberts
Rev. Brenda Simonds

2021 Recipients

J. André Aldridge
Rev. David O. Beadle
Winifred (Winnie) Ching
Rev. Dr. Roy Lewis Fry, Jr.
Rev. Robert Preston Price, III
Rev. Dr. Sharon Rhodes-Wickett
Jose Rodriguez
Joyce L. Zirkle

2020 Recipients

Rev. James Conn
Connee Freeman
Phil Freeman
Dan Gara
Lorraine Kadooka
Rev. Etuini Kelemen
Tupou Seini Kelemen
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. Dr. 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.
Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr.

Gloria Auburn

I was born in Corpus Christi, Texas in 1948. My family of nine moved to California in 1959 when the Naval Air Base closed, and my father could no longer paint airplanes.

I met my husband Frank (a painter) and we have two children, four grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

I have served the Lord at the Church of the Foothills in Duarte for 28 years and started teaching Sunday school, then became Director of children and youth ministries. I have been afforded the privilege of currently serving as President of The United Women in Faith, Chair of SPRC, Chair of Administrative Council, Sunday School teacher and church Historian, all of which bring me great joy.

Rev. Dr. Bau Dang

Rev. Dr. Bau Dang is a retired clergy member of The UMC. He served at Wesley UMC, San Diego from 1988-2008; District Superintendent of the Riverside District (2008-2012) and East District (2012-2014); and Garden Grove UMC from 2014-2012.

After retirement, Bau was still preaching weekly on Vietnamese radio stations in Orange County, San Diego, San Jose, and Dallas-Fort Worth, and teaching online until he had open-heart surgery. After recovering from bypass surgery, Bau continues to preach weekly on the Vietnamese Cable TV (57.10) to spread our Christian faith to the Vietnamese people. His messages are available on YouTube.com (Vietpho TV Su Diep Kinh Thanh)

In addition to this broadcasting ministry, Bau continues to preach and teach to Vietnamese Christians both on-site and online. Bau is pleased that the Vietnamese Bible that he translated has been used widely among the Vietnamese throughout the world.

You can access his Bible translation version at:

<https://ktbd2011.com> or iOS App: kinhthanhbd2011

or

Android Google Play App: Kinh Thanh Ban Dich 2011

Bau is very honored to be a recipient of the Bishop's Award in 2024.

Arlene Dempster

I was born Arlene Allison on July 10, 1929, in Ohio where my father was a teacher. Six years later my brother Jim completed the Allison family of Massillon, Ohio. My father was already involved in a First Methodist Church and my mother, and I joined him there.

I quickly learned that Sunday was church day. As Jim and I grew to the proper ages there were other groups we could join, and for me, that meant joining the children's choir and for both of us Methodist Youth Fellowship. We served as officers in the district and conference, and both of us served as president of the East Ohio Methodist Youth Fellowship.

Meanwhile, Harry Dempster had similar opportunities, but chose other directions. We knew each other casually but did not find each other until Harry was released from the Air Force, and I was graduated from Baldwin Wallace College (Methodist related) where I was part of the Methodist Student movement. The summer I graduated, 1951, I spent the summer as part of a Methodist Youth Caravan in North Carolina. After working in a local church in Ohio for a year, I decided I wanted to be a teacher, and went to Ohio State University for education classes, when Harry entered for engineer training in Aerospace, a new field.

We married in 1954, I taught high school English and Social Studies until our first son was born and Harry graduated in 1958. We packed up and moved to San Diego where he had accepted a job at the new Convair Aerospace Division.

We bought a house in North Clairemont, and I'm still there. Harry died in 2020. We reared two great sons, who gave us eight grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

continue...

Harry was very supportive of all the things I wanted to do, and I wish he was here to share in this award. He earned it!

We joined St. Mark's United Methodist Church where our sons were involved in the children's choirs, the Boy Scout Troop, and the Methodist Youth Fellowship. Meanwhile, Harry and I were both involved in several activities at St. Mark's. I became a District officer in United Methodist Women, which opened the door to being elected Conference Treasurer of UMW. And that led to an election to the Conference Board of Finance and Administration for two terms, and then to the Rules Committee where I served two years as Chairperson. At the same time, I was serving in several areas at my local church: Choir member for sixty years, chair of Church Council, Lay member of Annual Conference (forty years), trustees, and many years on the finance committee.

I have worked with many wonderful people through the years, both lay and clergy, and have been blessed by their friendship. My only regret is that I cannot continue what I have been doing due to health conditions.

Winnie James

I am a full blood Chickasaw from Ada, Oklahoma. I am 90 years old and moved to California in 1956 after graduating from Chillico Indian boarding school during the relocation era established by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

My mother passed away when I was 2 years old and my father raised me and my 3 other siblings and I am the youngest and the only survivor. My father passed away when I was 16 years old and he was a devoted UMC member.

After my father's passing, I then attended Chillico Indian Boarding school. While attending boarding school, I learned my secretarial skills and after graduation, my oldest brother allowed me to move to Los Angeles, California. During the 1950s the Los Angeles Indian Center was established to assist Native families with housing and job placement. At the time I moved to Los Angeles, City Hall was the tallest building and Griffith Park was a beautiful park. I moved into an apartment with two other women and later found employment.

I worked for 3 years, met my husband, a Navy Vet. and from the Sioux and Menominee nations and we had two children. I raised my children and went back to work when they were in junior high. I then found employment with Rockwell Space Station and retired after 20 years.

After retirement for two years, I went back to work for the Native American Methodist Church in Norwalk and then the church relocated to Anaheim. I also had the opportunity to work with many programs NAIC, CONAM, WJD and served as staff parish treasurer for our UMW, became a secretary for the Native Program at Claremont School of Theology. After leaving the school of theology, I became employed with the Anaheim Convention center for 18 years until COVID. During my time of retirement, I continued to play softball in a senior women's league and hung up my cleats at 63 years of age.

I currently have 3 granddaughters and 5 great-grandchildren. My grandkids and great-grand kids keep my heart young.

Albino "Al" Pineda

Albino Rivera Pineda is a civic leader, author, and beloved husband, father, and grandfather who is a long-time resident of Santa Paula, California. Albino was born in Phoenix, Arizona, on December 22, 1923, to Emilio and Dolores Pineda. After his father's premature death, Albino's mother, fearing she would be deported due to the Repatriation, took her young children, including Albino, and returned to Mexico among many other Mexican repatriates.

Albino returned to the U.S. in 1942 as a young man and made his way to Santa Paula where he met his future wife, Naomi Salas. Shortly after, he was inducted into the U.S. Armed Forces. He served in an artillery battalion in WWII in a Germany unit until the end of the war. He returned to Santa Paula after the war and married Naomi. Albino and Naomi raised their three children, John Al Pineda, Patricia Pineda, and Paul Pineda in Santa Paula.

Albino's first career was spent as one of the first Hispanic heavy equipment operators in the Southern California area. He worked in the construction of Matlija Dam and laying pipelines and storm drains throughout California and Nevada. After returning from his heavy equipment operator job in 1991, he was offered the opportunity of an unexpected second career as the Director of the Hispanic Ministries of The California-Pacific Conference of The United Methodist Church creating programs to develop lay missionaries. After working at this job for eight years, he finally returned for the second time in 2000 to be with his wife Naomi who was battling cancer and later passed.

In 2002, Albino married Lydia Sanchez. Throughout his life, he has been very involved in his church, El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church, and has served in various lay roles including Sunday School teacher, Chair of the Official Board, and church historian. He was also elected to serve as a member of the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church.

continue...

Albino has also always been very engaged in his community having served as chair of the Boy Scout's Troop Parent Committee, an elected member of the Santa Paula Elementary School District Board of Trustees, a member of the Ventura County School Boards Association, a long-term member of the Latino Town Hall, and a member of the local chapter of the Veterans of Foreign Affairs. He continues to hold the U.S. flag during burial ceremonies of veterans.

One of his most noteworthy accomplishments was his idea on vision and leadership to create a monument in honor of the men and women farm workers of the Santa Clara River Valley. As someone who had worked in the fields in the area during his youth, he believed the work of putting fresh produce on our tables was mostly unappreciated and deserved recognition. Thus, he raised monies and led a movement to build the monument in Santa Paula which is now located on Santa Barbara Street near the Santa Paula Depot. Today, the monument is cherished and visited by many. Around the time of his farm worker monument project, Albino completed his memoirs entitled "Among the Repatriated: Autobiography of a Mexican-American" which was published in 2008. He continues to believe that his life story is the life story of so many hard-working Latinos of his generation and today who have sought and are seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

On November 11, 2023, Albino celebrated his 100th year with family and friends at his beloved church in Santa Paula. He continues to live life fully with his wife Lydia and is now not only a grandfather of 5 grandchildren but also a great grandfather of 7 great-grandchildren.

Albino's motto is to be grateful for the life God has given us and to live it fully while living a healthy lifestyle. He has always looked forward to the next day.

Natividad Torres Lagaso

Natividad “Naty” Torres Lagaso was born in 1938 to Primitivo and Dionicia Torres in the village of Darapidap in the Philippines. The second of seven children, Naty and her family faithfully attended Candon Methodist Church.

Naty immigrated to Hawaii at the age of seven with her mother and younger siblings, joining her father who was a sugar cane laborer. With great will and help from her classmates, she mastered the English language, rising to the top of her class. After graduating from high school, Naty moved to Oahu to attend the Queen’s Hospital School of Nursing. She worked as an RN for a decade before transitioning into real estate sales, allowing her more time with her growing family.

Aldersgate United Methodist Church in Honolulu became the spiritual home to the Torres family in 1962. Naty met and married the love of her life, Alfredo Lagaso, that year when he was hired as the church’s choir director. The Lagasos raised three daughters – Nadine, Almarie and Trisha – in the embrace of Aldersgate UMC.

The United Methodist Women – now the United Women in Faith – played a crucial role in Naty’s journey as a Christian leader. She served as vice president and president on the district level. On the conference level, she served twice as Assistant Dean of the School of Christian Mission.

On the jurisdiction level, she served on the Special Education for Mission Task Force. Attending UMW meetings and conferences around the country and the world, serving and leading in faith beside her sisters in Christ, were some of the most cherished and beloved moments in her life.

continue...

In addition to sharing her time and talent with the church, Naty also shared her skills as an award-winning lei-maker. Through the years, her lei have been given with aloha to many church honorees and dignitaries. Fresh materials for her lei are picked from her family garden in Aiea – the culmination of years of careful planting and pruning alongside her husband, Al.

Naty once compared her spiritual journey to that of a plant, nurtured by God. “God is the ultimate potter of us all,” she said, “God sees the flaws, the nicks and rough edges about me, and yet continues to foster me so I can grow and be of service to others.”

Rev. Dr. Lydia Jackson Waters

Rev. Dr. Waters was born and educated in Texas. Her undergraduate studies were done at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas. Her graduate studies were done both at Southern Methodist University/ Perkins School of Theology in Dallas, Texas and the Claremont School of Theology in Claremont, California. She graduated from The Claremont School of Theology with a Master of Divinity Degree and received the Doctor of Divinity Degree from the Southern California School of Ministry.

Dr. Waters has a diverse background. Prior to her full-time pastorate, she was active in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960 and 70's, being among the first eight African American students who integrated Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas and being the first African American female, in North Texas, to become a ministerial candidate, mentored by Dr. Zan Holmes, Jr. She was also a member of the Domestic Peace Corp in Harlem, New York. Prior to leaving Texas, in 1984, she was a Human Development Consultant for the Foundation for Educational Skills, and an Account Executive for the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), Channel 13 in Dallas.

In 1984, Dr. Waters moved to The California-Pacific Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. In her conference, Dr. Waters was a member of the Board of Ordained Ministry, Chairperson of Ethnic Scholarships and Recruitment for the Board of Ordained Ministry, member of the Episcopacy Committee and Long Beach District Chairperson for Urban Ministries.

Nationally, Dr. Waters, was a member of the National Board of Black Methodist for Church Renewal and she was elected National President of the Black Clergywomen of The United Methodist Church for two terms.

continue...

Dr. Waters was appointed to Enterprise UMC in Compton, California in 1985. She merged Enterprise with St. Peters UMC and the two became Crossroads/Njia Panda UMC in Compton, California in 1991. She enjoyed a long-term pastorate of twenty years at Crossroads. Under her leadership the church grew spiritually, numerically, financially, and programmatically.

In those twenty years a successful merger was conducted, a new sanctuary was acquired and paid for and the congregation purchased a new parsonage. The church also completed a building project that included classrooms, administrative offices and a fellowship/training hall. Crossroads/Njia Panda was named among the first twenty-five churches chosen as Resource Centers for the General Conference initiative, “Strengthening the Black Church for the Twenty-first Century.” Dr. Waters has traveled the USA and abroad preaching the Word of God. She was the first Black female to preach in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Dr. Waters retired in the summer of 2005. In the summer of 2007 and 2008 she was on teaching staff for a two-week seminar at Kebler College, Oxford University, London, England. From 2008 until 2010 she was appointed the Executive Pastor of Administration for St. Luke “Community” United Methodist Church, Dallas, Texas.

In 2012-2015, Dr. Waters joined the staff at Keller First United Methodist Church, Keller, Texas as Pastor of Discipleship and Community. From 2015-2023 she was appointed Senior Pastor of First UMC in Pacoima, CA. Presently she resides in California.

