

Pacific Islander Ministry: Other Related Pacific Islander Ministries in the Diocese

St. James Episcopal Church, Kamuela -

Partnership between Saint James & Marshallese Congregation

“The partnership at St. James' started very simply. On a Sunday afternoon in September 2003, there was a knock at the rectory door. At the door were four PI gentlemen. We invited them in. They explained that they were the leadership of small congregation and that they were literally going from door to door of every church in Kamuela, looking for a place that would allow them to hold services. We realized that this was the grace of the Holy Spirit! We said that since St. James' hardly ever had a Sunday afternoon activity in the building, they were most welcome to use the sanctuary and fellowship hall. For about the first year or two, they paid a nominal rent.

But it soon became clear that this was not a rental situation; rather, this was a faith partnership. We urged the vestry and the congregation to see it that way. Over time the two congregations began to share activities. Most regular have been the clean-up days. The men are great at the outside stuff, and the women are fantastic at cleaning and polishing! Those days always include a shared meal (and sometimes shared worship -- the Marshallese joining the morning Eucharist, including some of their beautiful singing. Other joint activities included an Epiphany party and an invitation from the Marshallese congregation for Jana and me to attend a thank-you event as part of their Sunday worship once or twice a year. (Did I mention that theirs is a Full Gospel Church --lots of singing, preaching, and testifying!)

In fall of 2004, Jana worked with the parents from the Marshallese community to start the After School Program -- a tutoring session two days a week (originally it was three) targeting the younger elementary grades and focusing on language skills. That program is now in its seventh year. It began when Jana noticed that the Marshallese kids walked past the church every day on their way to and from the public school (government housing is about a quarter-mile west of the church and the schools are about the same distance east). The program is open to any child in grades 2-4, but the Marshallese families have been the most enthusiastic in supporting it.”*

**As written by Reverend Tony Litwinski in an e-mail (March 2011) to Ann Hansen.*

Christ Church Episcopal, Kealakekua -

Partnership between Christ Church and Marshallese Congregation

"Since the first of December, 2011, Christ Church, Kealakekua has hosted an enthusiastic community of believers from the Marshall Islands. What began as a tentative request for space use ("we're having an island-wide service and we need a place to gather") has become a long-term relationship that includes our Episcopal congregation and the Kona Full Gospel congregation.

In the beginning, ours was a simple space-sharing arrangement, with the Marshallese folks contributing a nominal cash offering to help defray expenses. There was little conversation between our two groups other than the necessary logistics of keys, cleaning, and scheduling. Guided by the Holy Spirit, and intrigued by the possibilities, I invited the Marshallese congregation to join us for our monthly worship/Sunday brunch in February. (And by the way, would you share a song as long as you're with us?)

We're still feeling our way along. Early on, it became clear that there wasn't much money for space rent, but Pastor Rona and friends were insistent that they contribute. With a bit of brainstorming, we came up with a plan that seems to work for both sides. Christ Church is providing gathering space and in exchange, the Marshallese congregation is providing janitorial services. It's been nearly five months, and so far, all appear to be happy with the arrangement. We are pleased to be able to share a wonderful facility. The Marshallese folks are gracious guests.

I believe we are only on the edges of developing the relationships that are possible. Despite (or maybe because of) some very obvious linguistic, cultural, and liturgical differences, we are connected by our faith in and love of Christ. For our part, the members of Christ Church need look only as far as the next table on the first Sunday of the month to see opportunities for outreach, as many of our Marshallese friends are struggling to make ends meet in a challenging economy.

I do not anticipate bringing any of these folks into the Episcopal Church; that's not what this is about. Our new friends have a genuine, vibrant tradition of their own. There's no need for conversion, but rather for conversation. By sharing our space, the occasional song, and more than a few meals, I think we can all grow in our faith and love."*

**As written by Rev. Dick Tardiff in an e-mail (June 2012) to Ann Hansen.*

St. Jude's Episcopal Church, Ocean View -

St. Jude's partnership with the Marshallese Congregation

"Early in the Marshallese's relocation to the "Big Island" and Ocean View in particular, the County came to Saint Jude's asking for space to hold English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for children. The children brought their parents and soon the families were learning English together. These classes continued for quite some time but as the parents learned the language well enough to find jobs, the children were no longer brought for classes.

Sometime during 2004 a Full Gospel congregation began using the church building on Sunday afternoons for their service. This group grew so large that it split and we had two Full Gospel Marshallese congregations for a time. Around 2009, one of the congregations stopped using St. Jude's and began meeting at their own housing compound. At this time we still have one congregation meeting on Sunday afternoons and there are about 100+ in attendance, many of which are children. They do help out when needed with yard work and sometimes cleaning of the church on work days.

In fall 2008 a community band was started for young and old. Cynn timer Decker encouraged the children to participate. Instruments were donated and children walked up to the church from the bus stop twice a week for lessons and practice. Support for this endeavor from the parents was not forthcoming and the children were not interested in learning music so Ms. Decker had to discontinue this outreach in 2010. The band however, is still in existence and the children and adults would be welcome back at anytime.

Since I was not in residence in the early years of the relocation of the Marshallese I have relied on information from others to learn their story."*

**As written by Cordelia Burt, Junior Warden, in an e-mail (April 2013) to Ann Hansen.*