

## **Pacific Islander Ministry: Our History**

The history of Hawai'i is the history of successive immigrant groups arriving on our shores for economic or political reasons. Each immigrant group encountered challenges struggling for acceptance but over a period of years became part of the fabric of Hawaiian society. Each immigrant group retained some of its food, language and customs while taking on many of the customs of the majority culture. In turn, the general society of Hawai'i adopted some of the characteristics of each ethnicity. During the last two hundred plus years since the arrival of the Europeans on these shores, there has been a repeated pattern of ethnic groups' struggles and eventual assimilation.

Saint Elizabeth's Church prides itself on being a "gateway church". Founded a century ago, it originally served Hawaiian and Chinese ethnicities. Later on Korean peoples looked to Saint Elizabeth's as their church home followed by the Filipinos. Now that those are established ethnic groups, the Micronesian immigrants are the latest wave of newcomers.

At the beginning of the COFA (Compact of Free Association) migration, Micronesian immigrants settled into Honolulu's most affordable housing. Many moved into federal projects such as Mayor Wright Housing, adjacent to Saint Elizabeth's. Reaching out to the Micronesians (primarily of Chuukese ancestry) began in 2003 and has been increasing in numbers served and programs provided. Although Saint Elizabeth's is the research and development center for the Pacific Islander Ministry Committee for the Diocese of Hawai'i, it is not the only parish serving Micronesian immigrants.

As the migration matures, the Micronesian population is spreading out from the urban core towards the Leeward Coast and central plateau of O'ahu plus the neighboring islands. Honolulu based churches: Saint Elizabeth's (in Palama), Saint Mary's (in Mō'ili'ili) and Saint Peter's (downtown Honolulu) have all had programs for their Micronesian participants for several years. Saint Nicholas has been reaching out to the Micronesian (both Marshallese and Chuukese) residents at Onemalu Shelter in Kalaeloa. On the Big Island, Saint James', Saint Jude's and Christ Church have "partner" congregations with Marshallese congregations using their facilities. Holy Apostles hosts a Chuukese "partner" congregation. Pacific Islander Ministry has been in contact with those parishes but has not yet assisted in developing programs on the Big Island.

***If your parish has a Micronesian community nearby and would like guidance in drawing them into your congregation or developing programs for them, please contact the Office of the Bishop which will contact Ann Hansen, Chair of the Pacific Islander Ministry Committee.***