

(10) The 1990's: Still Going Strong

If the 1980's was the dawn of the computer age, the 1990's brought the computer age to a new pinnacle. In the 90's the personal computer became more affordable and standardized, and with the development of the internet, computing reached new heights. As the year Y2K approached, one of the greatest fears was computer system "meltdown" proving how dependant the world had become on the computer. How the world would do business, education, and communication had changed forever.

With America as the world's only superpower, its enemies turned to terrorism to wage warfare on the US. The first gulf war showcased to the world a new age of American weaponry, and also a world economy that was now so linked to global events. Yet as the world became so controlled by science and technology, there grew a yearning for spirituality. Many turned to pantheistic leanings reminiscent of the new age movement that sought to touch base with various spiritual forces out there. Others returned to the church, and the development of the "superchurch" took flight in the 90's.

Within the postmodern world of the 90's, the township of Aiea began to be blurred into the sprawl of urban Honolulu and the endless homes of emerging communities like Pearl Ridge, Royal Summit, Newtown Estates, Stadium, and Salt Lake. The Aiea Sugar Mill was razed and the site became the home of the offices of the Sugar Association. The cane fields and their workers were only found in historical discussion and in pictures at the Waipahu Cultural Center.

Though the islands and the US may have been seeking a spiritual renewal in a postmodern world, Aiea church clung to its strengths seemingly oblivious to the surrounding upheaval. Sabbath school and children's ministry continued. Though "Pathfinder" was on the downswing, Aiea would find a large young adult group in the 90's led by Dennis and Lydia Kaeka. With the blessing of the "diving deacons," the Puuiki campout was almost a rite of passage into the Aiea ohana. It was noted that some families even returned after moving from the islands just to attend the Puuiki campout. One could see a military chaplain leading an outdoor service under the trees on Memorial Day or Labor Day weekend, croquet being played into the night, and Uncle Max bringing back a *manini* he speared, where later stories would morph it into a 100 pound ulua. =)

The Aiea choir continued its golden era, and Pastor Daryl Rott would lend his powerful tenor voice to some of the cantatas. But with the move of Dr. and Mrs. Lau to the mainland in the later 90's, one could say that the golden age of the Aiea choir was laid to rest. Yet even with Dr. Lau gone, the front of the Aiea sanctuary was renovated in the later 90's and made more attractive and performance friendly—this a dream of Aiea's longest serving choir master.

The advancing technology of the computer age would be seen and felt in Aiea as well. The coming of the video projector would bring in the monthly usage of "Mission

Spotlight and such programs as Net 95. This would give rise to the high lumen projection of the new millennium.

Besides Pastor Rott, the 90's featured Pastor Tom Becraft (98-01). Though Aiea no longer had true isseis, Pastor Becraft who was fluent in Japanese became a welcome minister amongst Aiea's Japanese group. By the end of the 90's Aiea's membership was over three hundred and its tithe-base made it the third largest church in the Hawaii conference. Yet one would not point to conference indicators as the strength of Aiea. The nicknames of groups within church pointed to a humorous side and down-to-earth openness of the members gifted by the Spirit to encourage and love. The "beach gang" led the camping and vespers. The choir ministered and created community. The "sanhedrin" solved the world's problems. The "diving deacons" did the dirty work. The young adults started the River of Life ministry. The "issei group" now became the elderly Japanese-speaking club who kept Aiea's potlucks alive. Yet in diversity Aiea continued to work together, praise together, and to befriend the visitors.

The 50th Anniversary of the church in 1997 reminded the members of how God had led in the past. And in this historical background the future looked bright.