

(7) The 1960's: Growth and Faithfulness

The sixties saw the downgrading of the Aiea Sugar Plantation. Sugar production was becoming more limited as the growth of suburbia took place. Subdivisions crept in and with them town centers with the small shopping centers, service stations, fast food joints, and some other mom and pop establishments. Cane haul roads became streets and municipal thoroughfares. School expansion realigned the area around Aiea into Pearl City, Waimalu, and Halawa. The day of the plantation camp had all but been forgotten.

The growth of Aiea also coincided with the growth of the island into the foundation for what it is today. The age of cheap cars and cheap gas had arrived. TV had taken a simple lifestyle into one that ebbed with America's fads. No longer was the island isolated from the flower children, JFK's assassination, the Beatles, the Berkeley and Kent State unrest, and the Vietnam conflict. The local SDA institution saw Castle Medical Center come into being, and the golden age of the Voice of Prophecy and the Vandeman Crusades even embrace Hawaii.

The Aiea church also saw growth in the 60's. In the decade the church was led by pastors Gordon Collier, Darryl Mayberry, Jerry Dill, George Kiyabu (who returned for a second term as pastor), and James Finn, Jr. The most obvious growth was in the physical plant itself. For almost two years Sundays were taken up with the building of the church's baptismal area, restrooms, and classrooms. The multi-purpose hall was also completed and named Baker Hall. The name was given in honor of a couple who in reality were just visitors to the Aiea church. Mr. and Mrs. Reginald E. Baker from California visited the church one sabbath and endeared themselves to the members. They were so loved by the Aiea members that on a subsequent visit the church held a golden anniversary celebration for them. The gifts to them at their anniversary, and a generous portion of their wealth, were given to Aiea's building program; hence the naming of Baker Hall.

The strong Pathfinder program continued with incentive trips to the Big Island and Molokai and Maui. The club showcased names that were evidence of a second generation of Aiea members. For example the Pathfinder clubs of the 60's included names such as Okihiro, Oshiro, Nitta, Otsuka, Quizon, Arakaki, Emoto, Villegas and Kiyabu. The Pathfinder program indeed was part of the "ministry to children" that Pastor Lyle Arakakai referred to as he reminisced about attending Aiea in the 60's.

The strong ministry to children that Pastor Arakaki has spoken of could also be seen in the smiles of the isseis such as Mr. and Mrs. Tetsuo Toyama, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Hirata, Mrs. Iha, Mr. and Mrs. Kashin Kakazu, Mr. and Mrs. Arakaki, and Mrs. Miyashiro. It was the faithful Aiea members bringing their nieces and nephews, and their own children, to church and sabbath school every week that was integral to the ministry. And we must not forget the faithful members who manned the sabbath school positions every sabbath regardless of the numbers or glamour. When Pastor Lloyd Munson took over in 2003, he was even pleasantly surprised to see a solid sabbath school still in place in Aiea.

Pastor Lyle Arakaki also mentioned a “long tradition of outstanding music” as a strength of Aiea in the 60’s. As one looks back at Aiea’s history, music has always stood out. From the pump organ of Howard Lee and the broken-stringed violin of Mrs. Alapa to the contributions of the Severins, Cusons/Mirafuentes, and Ramos’ of today, Aiea has always been blessed with fine musical talent. In the 60’s one could remember the music of Kenneth Fujimoto, Aunty Kaeka and Lei Juarros, and the harmonica of Shige Kobashigawa. The original Aiea quartet of Kiyoshi Nakashima, Kenneth Fujimoto, Kenneth Kakazu and Eddie Kakazu gave way to the quartet of Joe Waipa, Ken Fujimoto, Bill Villegas and Shige Kobashigawa. Pastor Lyle also remembers the sweet voices of Naomi Kiyabu Smith and Juliana Juarros Moniz, and the soulful violin of Mary Castor.

Even though the Aiea area was no longer the sea of waving cane, and from Aiea heights one could see subdivisions, buildings and Aiea High, the Aiea SDA church remained in tact and continued to flourish. Yet greater than the new additions and Baker Hall, and still greater than the Pathfinder club, the sabbath school or the musical talent, was the spirit-led faithfulness of all the Aiea members. God had not called Aiea to success but to faithfulness. It was the faithfulness that brought the continued spiritual renewal and the seeming outward successes.

The spirit-fed fruit of faithfulness caused Mr. Toyama to give hugs to children every sabbath. The fruit of faithfulness led Aunty Betty Emoto to go and pick up Lyle Arakaki and his siblings in Ewa every sabbath. Faithfulness led Bill Villegas to hold Pathfinder meetings every Saturday night for 19 years. Faithfulness led Ken Fujimoto to hold his position in the children’s divisions and lead out in music all those years. Faithfulness caused Aunty Kay and Lei to add their voices and ukuleles to the church’s music.

The strength of Aiea spoken of in this chapter could be seen on a typical sabbath morning in Aiea heights. There amongst the trees at the start of the original Aiea Loop Trail (where local hikers refer to as trail one ridge), one could hear memory verses being recited and a song sung in Spanish. As the morning sun filtered through the eucalyptus and *ohia*, and as the creepers and *amakihi*s darted through the *waiwi*, one could hear the words of this song sung by Manuel Juarros and his daughters Juliana and Linda blending in with the sounds of leaves rustling in the trade winds. (Here are the words of the refrain in English)

Far beyond the sun
Far beyond the sun
Up there is my home
My home, blessed home
Far beyond the sun

May the Aiea church of today continue to minister to its children through the fruit of faithfulness and its gift of music.

