

2026 Bishop's Address

To the 58th Annual Meeting of the Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i

'Iolani School, Honolulu

October 17, 2026

Aloha kakahiaka.

Hāfa Adai. Manana Si Yu'os.

Good morning.

As your Bishop, I am a settler on this 'āina, but I now call this very neighborhood of Mō'ili'ili my home.

I can trace my family's roots as settlers in North America through the modern states of Virginia, Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, and before that, in the earliest years of the 18th century, to Ireland and Scotland.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that the 'āina on which we gather today, mokupuni of O'ahu, moku of Kona, ahupua'a of Waikīkī, and 'ili of Kamoku, is part of the larger territory recognized by Kānaka 'Ōiwi as their ancestral grandmother, Papahānaumoku.

I recognize that Her Majesty Queen Lili'uokalani, a member of our Church, yielded the Hawaiian Kingdom and these territories to the United States, under duress and protest, to avoid the bloodshed of her people. I further recognize that Hawai'i remains an illegally occupied nation.

As Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i, I honor and give thanks for the founding patrons of our Church, King Kamehameha IV and blessed Queen Emma. I acknowledge the trust they committed to our Church in 1862 to care for their people – Kānaka 'Ōiwi – and all of the children of these islands, and our responsibility to care for all of creation. As the Bishop of the Church invited to these islands, I deeply regret that we have not always fulfilled our responsibility over these many decades. We have too often failed and turned a blind eye to those around us. For those things that we as the Church and as individual Episcopalians have done and the many things we have left undone, that contributed to the harm inflicted on nā Kānaka 'Ōiwi and these islands, I offer our collective lamentation. I ask God's forgiveness.

I ask for the prayers of our blessed Ali'i ancestors and you, God's people, that we will have the will and courage to better fulfill our responsibility – kā mākou kuleana – to the people of these islands, of Guam and Saipan, and for God's creation.

Mahalo ke Akua.

I come to you today as your Bishop Diocesan for the nineteenth and last time.

While the Bishop's written report generally reviews the past year in the Diocese, this address is meant to cast a look to the future. In this case, however, it is for me to look to the past with

thanks and to the future with hope. The leadership of the future is entrusted to others and, especially, to our new bishop.

I stand here today because of one person – Bishop Richard S.O. Chang. On a snowy January day many years ago in Fort Wayne, Indiana, I opened a letter from Bishop Chang asking if I would be interested in applying for a position to be his canon and the vicar of a small congregation. I did not know Bishop Chang or anything about the Diocese or Hawai‘i. I would only find out later that my name had been suggested to him separately by two of my mentors. Through interviews and prayers, Bishop Chang called me to ministry in this Diocese. After nearly 27 years, this has become home for my family and me. Not a day goes by without a prayer of thanks for Bishop Chang and his invitation. Even in these nearly ten years since his death, I miss our every other month lunches. His memory is truly a blessing.

I am also grateful to far too many people to mention. Some thanks were shared in my written report to this Convention and some yesterday with those to whom I gave the Bishop’s Cross. There are, of course, so many more. Some worked with me in the Diocesan Support Center: Liz Beasley and Peter Pereira, Marie Elisarke and Denise Esposito; others have been lay leaders in the Diocese and their congregations, like Louise Aloy and Lot Lau, John Hawkins and Diane Delos Reyes. I have been honored to serve with wonderful clergy – and I ordained many of you. I also remember so many lay leaders and clergy now with us in the Communion of Saints, like Cecilia Fordham and Kala Holden, David Kennedy and Tim Quintaro, and so many others.

All of this is to say that I am thankful to God for all of you and for this Diocese. Mahalo!

I must, however, add one more person. Bea and I have been married for 44 years. We have lived in Indiana, New Jersey, New York, Nigeria and, finally, Hawai‘i. Home for me is always wherever Bea is. My ringtone for Bea’s calls and texts says it all: Barry White singing “You’re the first, the last, my everything. And the answer to all my dreams.” Bea, I love you.

Now, as I leave you as your Bishop, let me offer some thoughts about the future.

The islands of Hawai‘i and Micronesia are unique in the Episcopal Church. We do not belong to North America. We are part of Oceania. While we are currently part of the United States, our culture, our economy, and our lives are directly shaped by the Pacific Ocean – by Oceania and Asia. We must never forget to look to the west and to the south – to watch and learn from the Ocean. Our relationships with the Philippines and Polynesia, Aotearoa and Taiwan, are essential to our identity and our common life as a Diocese. Our ‘Ohana stretches across the Pacific. We represent the Episcopal Church to the Anglican Communion in Oceania and Asia. It is our kuleana – our responsibility.

As a people of islands, we must continue to acknowledge that climate change and the destruction of the environment have a profound impact on our lives. We human beings have made a mess of things. We have not been faithful stewards of creation. While we must repent and try to mitigate the impact, God’s people in all our islands must prepare for a drastically changing environment. This means continuing to adapt our facilities. The storms of the past two years have convinced me that we need to learn from the Church in Polynesia and make our

congregations centers of response as they have done, stockpiling emergency supplies and equipment. This means more training and planning. We have had trainings and even worked with each congregation on emergency plans. We have responded as a Diocese and in our congregations to the crises of the past few years. I think that further preparation is needed. Fortunately, we have a Community Relations Coordinator on staff to help guide us. I suggest that Kahuaola – formerly the Environmental Justice and Creation Care Task Force – be charged with the responsibility for helping our congregations prepare for changes in the environment and to respond to future natural disasters. Preparing for a changing environment will take commitment. I believe our congregations and Diocese, rooted in aloha and mālama, are already well suited to be places of refuge and hope.

One of my joys as Bishop has been ordaining more local and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi clergy than any other bishop in our history. We have been able to do so because of the establishment of the Waiolaihui‘ia Center for Ministry in partnership with the Iona Collaborative at Seminary of the Southwest, and relationships with other seminaries. We know the shape of ordained ministry is changing. Some of those whom I have ordained have reached, or soon will reach, retirement age. Even then, many continue to serve. My word to you is this: Do not expect the Bishop alone to raise up new folk for ordination or lay leadership. Those called to ministry are identified at the local level. It is up to you as the clergy and the lay leaders to identify and support those called into ministry – lay and ordained. Please don’t ask our new Bishop what she is going to do to get more local and Kānaka ‘Ōiwi clergy and lay leaders. I know from firsthand experience that many of you in this room whom I ordained began as lay leaders of your congregations, and that clergy (including me when I was a Canon and then as Bishop) called you to ordination. It took some of you years – many years – to answer. You did answer. It is up to the Bishop and the Diocese – especially the Canon for Ministry Formation and the Commission on Ministry – to provide the means for discernment, evaluation, and formation. The Convention must provide the resources for them to do their ministry, but the discernment and the call begin in the congregation. So, my challenge to you – clergy and lay leaders of this Diocese – is to identify the leaders of your congregations and this Diocese, and help them step up. It begins with you!

An element of that ongoing work of our common life as a Diocese is to continue engaging Hō‘imi Pono from the Racial Reconciliation Task Force. I particularly urge Nā Leo o nā ‘Ōiwi – the Native Hawaiian Ministry Committee – to help lead this work. As the new translation of the liturgies into ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i is shared, I call you to a ministry of education and reconciliation within the Diocese. With our new Canon for Pilina – that is a Canon for “relationships” – we will have one to help guide this ministry. The issues of sovereignty, the presence of the military, and cultural appropriation are not going to go away. As the cost of living remains so high and affordable housing unavailable forcing so many local families to relocate to North America, the tensions in our communities will increase. It is the responsibility of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai‘i to be a place of honest conversation and of reconciliation. I think we must commit as a Diocese to engage Hō‘imi Pono (or its next generation of conversation), and to honor the aspirations of Kānaka ‘Ōiwi and all who go unheard in our communities. We are well suited for this responsibility – perhaps better suited than any other diocese in the Episcopal Church to do such honest listening with an ability to faithfully respond.

You – God’s people – have much love to share. My prayer for you is that more people in our islands can know the love of God in such warm and inclusive communities of faith. In the words of our own Bishop Ed Browning: “there shall be no outcasts” in God’s Church. While we live in the world as it is, we have a vision of the world as it has been called by God to be – gatherings of fellowship, righteousness, and love. I pray that our congregations will continue being bastions of hope.

As you know, I have looked on the primary ministry of the Bishop as that of teacher carrying the story of salvation and reconciliation through Jesus Christ, and articulating the sacred story of God’s people in this Diocese. At least, that is the role that has best suited my personality: teacher and storyteller. I am often guided by the proverb: “I ka wā ma mua, ka wā ma hope” (“Look to the past to guide the future”). I know you – God’s people – because I know the stories of this Diocese, of the congregations, and of our ancestors.

I have tried very hard to teach the virtues and hold to account those in authority – in my own way – for their behaviors and their statements. I have tried in my public teaching to leave individuals to God’s judgment while being honest about the hurt and evil done by nations and leaders. This has drawn some interesting responses. In one recent week, I received a letter telling me that this person regretted supporting me when I was elected bishop and that he was most happy that I was retiring – though he feared the next bishop would be no better. The person was convinced from what I preached and have written that I hate the President and all Republicans – and that I have been way too political. That same week another letter arrived from a senior member of the Diocese to say that I should be ashamed for not boldly calling out the President as a “dictator and charlatan” by name, and for not joining the protest marches. I only smiled. Nani, my Executive Assistant, was less generous in her response.

For me it has been about teaching and being a witness to Jesus Christ. It has, I hope, been about Christian virtues and the love of God. This is what guided me during the marriage equality debates. For me it was about caring for my parishioners and my clergy who wanted legal recognition of the commitment that had already been made. When I gathered our clergy to join the protectors during the Mauna Kea protests, it was a witness of a community and not of a single person. It was about standing with you – God’s people. When I organized church denominational and other faith leaders to sign public letters supporting things like the minimum wage increases and housing access – it was always for you. When responding to the financial crisis of 2007/8, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (even when my son was deployed), the Pandemic, the Lahaina Fire, the hurricanes and typhoons – it was about you – God’s people, my people, my ‘Ohana. You are the continuation, the ongoing story of God here in this Diocese. Here on Guam and Saipan, Kaua‘i and O‘ahu, Moloka‘i and Maui, and on Hawai‘i. We must always strive to be a witness to the love of God in Jesus Christ wherever we are planted.

I hope, most importantly, that my time with you as your Bishop has been about teaching and living into the values of our Diocese. Three Hawaiian values were adopted as our diocesan values by this Convention in 2004: “Mana, Mālama and Pono.” In life, we must seek to care for creation, for one another and all that God has given us: Mālama. We all affirm the call from God to live righteously and in respect for one another: Pono. We can affirm that all that is holy and

good, the spiritual force of being, comes from God: Mana. These values have grounded my ministry. I pray that all we have done together has lived into those values.

Where I have failed you (and I have certainly had times of failure), I ask your forgiveness and, especially, that of God. Where we have lived into these values and into the responsibility entrusted to us by the Holy Sovereigns, let us give the glory to God.

So, Libby, I leave you a Diocese of God's people who care for their churches, their islands, and one another. I leave you with a Diocese that is stable, resilient, and, above all, faithful. I leave with a heart full of gratitude to God, and with great hope for this Diocese and for you as the one who will lead us. I promise you my support and my prayers. I look forward to the time very soon that you will be my Bishop. There is much good work to be done. I am confident that the Holy Spirit will work wonders in this Diocese.

Libby, my prayer for you comes from Ephesians 3:18–21:

“I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”

And finally to everyone gathered here today, I leave you as always with the words of St. Paul from First Corinthians:

“No ia mea, e nā hoahānau, e kūpa‘a ‘oukou, me ka nāueue ‘ole, me ka ho‘omau i kā ‘oukou hana nui ‘ana i ka hana a ka Haku, no ka mea, ua ‘ike nō ‘oukou, ‘a‘ole i make hewa kā ‘oukou hana ‘ana ma ka Haku.” Korineto I 15:58

“Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” I Corinthians 15:58

Thanks be to God, and thank you my family in Christ.

Aloha.