

From the Bishop

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick

The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



July 10, 2026

Aloha my dear Siblings in Christ,

During a recent visitation, I was asked by a parishioner what I thought the impact of the Pandemic and disasters have had on the Diocese. It gave me a moment of pause to reflect on the past few years and all that has happened. The impact of the Pandemic and Maui fires have been profound.

For the first ten years of my time as Bishop, we were one of the few Dioceses that was growing (slowly) in average Sunday attendance. Some will remember articles in the Episcopal News Service noting that reality. Part of the reason is that demographically we do have parishioners who live to amazing old ages. It was also a time of growth as the world recovered from the financial crisis of 2008. The visitor industry was thriving.

As I look at the numbers, there were some major changes in average Sunday attendance from 2019 to 2025. I am considering average Sunday attendance as a key indicator here because for congregations the core leadership and energy come from those physically at worship. Congregations may have a significant online presence that can reach many people, which is great. Likewise, congregations may have essential outreach programs and impactful small group ministries beyond Sunday worship. I appreciate the additional work that goes into those ministries. It is, however, still the case that the life blood of the vast majority of congregations (in terms of commitment, leadership, financial support, and spiritual vitality) is provided by those who gather regularly in worship on Saturdays (evenings) and Sundays (mornings and evenings).

I should note that for many churches, there has been significant growth from 2020 (and the arrival of the Pandemic with shutdowns and changes in lifestyle) to 2026, but we have not recovered from the Pandemic and other negative factors. I am also aware that congregations have had transition in clergy and lay leadership over this time. We have lost significant Kupuna. There are many factors that impact any individual congregation's life. Overall, however, congregational life has changed.

We must also be aware that we live in changing communities. The State of Hawai'i is declining in population and quickly aging. Guam less so, but that island is impacted by a recent massive construction of military facilities. All of the counties and Guam are seeing a reduction in the populations of the public schools [the same is true for most (except of a select few) independent and parochial schools as well]. I think these realities are due to the ongoing impact of the Pandemic and disasters (especially the fire on Maui, recent floods, and typhoons). We have also seen a significant decrease in immigration. That has impacted several of our congregations and the workforce statewide. Taken together, we live generally in older communities than in 2019

and with fewer people. There is also the very high cost of living and lack of affordable housing. There are, therefore, shifts in population on each island as people move to developing areas seeking more affordable housing. Some corners also have had a significant increase in retirees moving here from North America.

So, the question was a good one. I have lived this changing reality with you. The question gave me a moment of pause to reflect on how much has changed in our islands. I share this reflection and the numbers as Bishop-elect Libby prepares to lead the Diocese into a new time and essential planning during 2027. She is taking up ministry in a different time than I did in 2007. As I consider the crash of 2008, the Pandemic, the Maui fires, and floods/storms, I realize the reshaping of our common life and ministry has been very real.

I deeply appreciate how much the clergy and lay leaders have given during some difficult times. Mahalo! The resilience and faithfulness of our Diocese is amazing. You have made me proud to be your Bishop.

The girls of St. Andrew's Priory have reminded me through the years that Queen Emma was guided by a Hawaiian proverb: Kūlia i ka nu'u, (which translates into English as "Strive for the highest"). As we look to our new Bishop and a time to re-evaluate and plan for the next phase of our Diocesan common life and realistically understanding our current ministry environment, let us keep this proverb in mind. Whatever her difficulties, the Queen is the example of one who continued to strive for her people and with a profound faith.

As always, I leave with St. Paul's admonition:

"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

Finally, be sure to keep Bishop-elect Libby and the Diocese in your prayers as we discern God's mission in our islands.

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko mākou Haku,
+Bob

The Right Reverend Robert L. Fitzpatrick

Bishop Diocesan
The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i
The Episcopal Church in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam and Saipan

Average Sunday Attendance (ASA) as reported in the 2019 and 2025 Parochial Reports for Missions and Parishes (listed from highest to lowest ASA as of 2025)

Cathedral	Parish	Mission/Aided Parish	Preaching Station
		2019	2025
1.	St. Andrew's (O'ahu)	216	188
2.	St. James (Hawai'i) ¹	196	142
3.	St. Paul's (O'ahu)	210	138
4.	St. Mark's (O'ahu)	117	104
5.	Good Shepherd (Maui)	107	100
6.	St. Elizabeth's (O'ahu)	187	92
7.	St. Christopher's (O'ahu)	94	88
8.	St. Peter's (O'ahu)	117	86
9.	St. Timothy's (O'ahu)	77	85
10.	Epiphany (O'ahu)	67	80
11.	St. John's (Maui)	102	75
12.	Holy Apostles (Hawai'i)	103	71
13.	All Saints (Kaua'i)	97	68
14.	ECWK (Kaua'i) ²	41	62
15.	St. John the Divine (Guam) ³	52	61
16.	St. Clement (O'ahu)	102	60
17.	Trinity BTS (Maui)	48	55
18.	[Holy Innocents (Maui) ⁴	53	10]
19.	St. Michael's (Kaua'i)	113	52
20.	Holy Nativity (O'ahu)	61	50
21.	Halau Wa'a (O'ahu)	0	45
22.	Christ Church (Hawai'i)	57	43
23.	St. Stephen's (O'ahu)	33	37
24.	St. Augustine's (Hawai'i)	79	36
25.	St. John the Baptist (O'ahu)	28	36
26.	Emmanuel (O'ahu)	46	35
27.	St. Mary's (O'ahu)	39	35
28.	Good Samaritan (O'ahu)	20	34
29.	Christ Memorial (Kaua'i)	58	33
30.	St. Jude's (Hawai'i)	36	32
31.	Grace (Molokai)	33	21
32.	St. John's BTS (O'ahu)	38	20
33.	St. Matthew's (O'ahu)	14	19
34.	St. Luke's (O'ahu)	26	17
35.	Holy Cross (O'ahu)	5	6

¹ St. James numbers include three worship sites.

² Episcopal Church on West Kaua'i includes two worship sites.

³ St. John's, Guam, includes two worship sites.

⁴ Following the 2023 Maui fire and the destruction of the Church buildings, the remnant of the congregation continues to worship in a United Methodist Church as a ministry of the Trinity By-the-Sea Mission. "Holy Innocents" is a preaching station of that Mission.

Population trends by County and Guam:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2025</u>	Current estimated median age
Hawai‘i	210,043	211,036	44
Honolulu	988,703	987,264	40
Kaua‘i	73,400	73,360	43
Maui	160,592	158,946	43
Guam	166,000	168,999	30

Number of Public School students:

	<u>2019</u>	<u>2025</u>
Hawai‘i	23,100	21,200
Honolulu	113,800	102,000
Kaua‘i	9,300	8,300
Maui	21,300	18,700
Guam	28,800	21,300