

St. John's Episcopal Church

History of St. John's Church

In the 19th Century, sugar growers in Hawai'i imported laborers from many parts of the world. One of these countries was China. When the Chinese workers completed their contracts most returned to China, with their savings; but some remained in Hawai'i. The Chinese laborers who settled in Keokea raised vegetables. Their produce was shipped as far as California and fed Chinese laborers who built the railroad through the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

Being very practical, the Chinese settlers perceived that Christianity had become the predominant local religion. So they elected to call the Lutheran trained Christian minister Rev. Shim Yin Chin from Canton, China. His duties were to teach children Chinese culture and language after they attended daily classes at Keokea School. They also organized the men who worked hard all week but enjoyed gathering on Sunday afternoon to discuss world politics. Father Shim was able to bring them recent news from China by reading aloud his newspapers. That group was called "The World Knowledge Society."

Much planning for the future took place at these World Society meetings as Father Shim arrived in 1900 and by 1906 orders for a plain wooden Church had been placed and materials had arrived at Makena landing on the coast about 3,000 ft directly below the proposed building site. The materials were delivered by horse drawn wagons and by 1907, the church had been built. It was designated an Anglican Church because there was no Lutheran church here. Fr. Shim was ordained Deacon in 1905 and as priest in 1909. Father Shim returned to China in 1910 and brought his two sons, Wai On and Wai Cheong back to Maui. His wife, Kui Kyau Shim, and two daughters, Don Lyam and Dyun Lyam. arrived in 1915. Father Shim died June 26, 1918.

In 1923 Mrs. Kui Kyau Shim came back to Keokea from Honolulu at the request of Bishop Restarick and served here as "Sunday School Superintendent" and "Bible Woman" for many years. Old-timers speak of Mrs. Shim as a woman who wore black and made visits on Sunday afternoons to the homes of people who missed church that day! Christmas Eve is remembered as a time when children received paper bags filled with hard

candies, nuts and an orange. Another special treat was on that night, the children were allowed to drink a cup of coffee. Mrs. Kui Kyau Shim taught the people, prepared them for baptism, and confirmation, and organized priests from Good Shepherd who came regularly to serve communion. Mrs. Shim retired in 1944. The oldest son of Yin Chin and Kui Kyau, Wai On, was a priest who came and served at St. John's from time to time. The first English speaking priest, the Rev. Hugh Thompson, came to St. John's in 1949. Many priests came to St. John's and served short periods of time. The following is a list of them:

- Vicars: Shim Yin Chin 1900-1918; Shim Kui Kyau 1923-1930 (Superintendent);
- Wai On Shim 1948-1950; Hugh L. Thompson 1950-195; Norman C. Ault 1951-1956, 1968 – 1973;
- Joseph N. Barnett 1956; Claude DuTeil 1956-1957; Donald L. Terry 1957-1958;
- Jefferson C. Stephens Jr. 1958 – 1960; Robert N. Stretch 1960-1961;
- Shelton Hale Bishop 1961 – 1962; Iver J. Torgerson 1962-1968;
- Peter E. Van Horne 1973 - 1978 (Rector from 1976); H. Robert Burton 1979-1981;
- Heather Mueller 1981-2010.

Some specific ministers are important to mention

Father Shelton Hale Bishop served for a year 1961-1962. Vestments, which are still used today, were created by the women of St. Phillips in Harlem. Father Bishop had retired after serving St. Phillips for several decades. Father Bishop had a gas heater installed in the church and actually died in the new St. John's Rectory in 1962.

The **Rev. Jefferson Stevens** and his family were the first people to live in the new rectory. It was built in 1960 and the old rectory was moved down Kula highway about a mile.

One of the most beloved priests to serve at St. John's was The **Rev. Norman Ault**.

In 1976 St. John's Mission became a parish under the leadership of The **Rev. Peter Van Horne**. With great effort and a lot of support from many people, St. John's has not only remained a parish but has gone through several major renovations and expansions.

In 1981 St. John's called **Heather Mueller** – She was the first woman to be called to be a rector in Province VIII. In 1985-1987 St. John's renovated the church, added a choir space and purchased a tracker organ from Germany. The Parish Hall was enlarged to include 3 classrooms, 2 offices, a conference room, an attic space, 4 bathrooms, and an expanded kitchen space. The renovated and expanded spaces have been put to good use throughout the years housing musical presentations, youth groups and groups looking for space to come together and explore spirituality and community issues.

In 2001 an opportunity presented itself for St. John's to acquire the land below and to the Kahului side of the church. With a lot of great support and good planning the church was able to buy 4.4 acres and in doing this could accommodate some additional programs or projects in the future. They have also protected the space around the church from development.

The 2009/2010 project was the reorganization of the St. John's cemetery. It has been laid out to provide paths and space for a gazebo. A pathway to the lower land will be installed, hopefully constructed with memorial pavers. The installation of a columbarium is on the near horizon.

In September 2010, Rev. Heather Mueller retired after serving 29 years at St. John's. These three decades have unfolded with many changes in the world and on Maui.