

by faith

Hebrews 11 is an amazing chapter of the Bible. It recounts exciting stories of Bible heroes who “by faith” walked with God, built an ark, left their homes in hopes of an eternal home. By faith, they trusted God to give them a child, or hid their precious son away in a floating basket. They conquered kingdoms, administered justice, received back their dead, faced chains and imprisonment. The stories are endless. These were, in fact, not super-human heroes, but ordinary people like you and me. Their faith in God was what mattered, not their intelligence, skill, or resources— for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6).

by faith in the past

The theme for our 2019 Global Missions Conference is “By Faith.” We will kick off the conference by recognizing Park Street’s faith-filled people of the past, as we celebrate the Hawaiian Mission Bicentennial. Two hundred years ago, a joint team of Hawaiians and New Englanders set sail from Boston Harbor for Hawaii (at that time called the Sandwich Islands), after a commissioning service at Park Street Church on October 15, 1819. “By faith,” they went on a 18,000-mile ocean journey without

knowing the outcome. Their faith had been inspired by a young Hawaiian Christian, Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia (Obookiah), who had a burning passion to take the gospel back to his own people. It was his infectious faith that eventually catalyzed the establishment of churches, schools, and hospitals, which sprang up across the Hawaiian Islands in the 1800s. Many of these survive today as authentic expressions of Hawaiian identity.



Portrait of Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia,
Hawaii State Archives

It will be our privilege to welcome over a hundred Hawaiians to Park Street to celebrate these historic events. Some of our guests are direct descendants of the early missionaries. Others are historians, linguists, musicians, educators, and fellow believers from several of the original churches in Hawaii. On Sunday, October 20, our guests will help us celebrate God’s faithfulness to Hawaii in our worship services. On Wednesday, October 23, there will be a special evening of music, stories and other

expressions of Hawaiian culture. We want to learn from the faith of the first believers and missionaries in Hawaii in ways that honor them and glorify God, but also that spur us on in our current missionary endeavors.

by faith in the present

In the second weekend of our conference, you will hear stories of faith in the present. If the first missionaries to Hawaii formed cross-cultural teams, set out by faith not by sight, and experienced the Lord’s extraordinary providence, then our present-day missionaries can also testify to similar experiences. We will welcome Park Street missionaries from Africa, Asia and the Middle East. One of our missionaries joining us will be Nancy Haynes. She is about to retire after 35+ years of service. Several years ago, I had the opportunity with one of our elders to visit Nancy in West Africa. She had worked closely with Jean Claude, a Cameroonian leader, to translate the Bible into the Yemba language. Through reading the book of Jonah in this new translation, Jean Claude’s own father, a believer in African traditional religion, put his faith in Christ.

by faith in the future

We plan to wrap up our Global Missions Conference with a challenge to serve “by faith” in the future. Park Street’s earliest missionary endeavors and our present missions engagement have been characterized “by faith.” Ordinary people step out in mission to serve an extraordinary God. They aren’t super-saints. They do not always realize the implications of what they are doing. However, the Lord continues to call or-

dinary, broken people like you and me to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to those at the ends of our streets.

We will outline some of the new initiatives the Lord is inviting us into as a church. We know of very few believers in Japan, the Middle East, and Central Asia, yet God is creating new opportunities in which Park Street Church can humbly serve. The Lord is also stirring up the congregation to engage in the city of Boston through our “One-Mile” vision, soon to be catalyzed by a newly appointed Minister of City Engagement.

We hope you will jump in during the 2019 Global Missions Conference. Attend an event during the Hawaiian Bicentennial celebration. Invite a missionary out for coffee. Find out how they have taken steps of faith. Explore opportunities to serve through a short-term mission trip or a Barnabas Group. Designate part of your regular financial offering to missions. Commit to pray weekly for our missionaries. May you be inspired to take a new step of faith in mission this year! It only takes a mustard seed of faith to move mountains (Matthew 17:20). But it does take faith.

Julian

