



25 Years of God's Faithfulness



A few weekends ago we celebrated the 25th birthday of YWAM/University of the Nations' beginnings in Kona, Hawaii.

A "museum" was created for the event, full of old photos from the 70s---the clothing and hair styles were something else! (...although I must say some looked like the "latest fashions"). In addition to the photos, there were old videos, T-shirts, books, music tapes and brochures. Of course, as we browsed, we laughed out loud...but we were also reminded of God's incredible faithfulness. During those early years...

- we ran a grammar school for children in an apartment, reserving two parking stalls for the "playground"
- we started teaching university courses, using an old tomato shed as our classroom
- we had students and staff living in tents and spread throughout the Kailua area in temporary housing, many having to relocate nearly every month.

Finally, we were able to move into our 45-acre "promised land": the former Pacific Empress Hotel. We set out to resurrect the broken-down buildings from the weeds that had engulfed them. Even in ruins, we thought it was beautiful, and we began to develop it into our inheritance: a university campus. I'm sure you remember the stories if you've read "Is that Really You, God?" From this humble beginning, the University of the Nations was launched.

As you know, YWAM is a volunteer organization, so we couldn't just decide we wanted to start a communication course and then go out and hire a professor to lead it. The process was and is based on hearing the voice of the Lord: "God, do You want us to start a university? If so, then You will have to bring the people with the gifts and calling to do it...and provide the finances!"

In these last 25 years, He has done just that. He started by bringing a leading scientist and master teacher, Dr. Howard Malmstadt, to co-found the university and help create its unique characteristics: modular courses, live-learn environment, visiting professors. And God is still doing it today, bringing young pioneers with passion in their hearts like Davis Norment. Currently, Davis is running a provocative new course in the College of Humanities and International Studies called the "Battle of Beliefs" that uses innovative approaches to explore questions of Biblical worldview and why we believe what we believe. A new generation of young people thronged to take the course because they are eager to know and share truth.

From those meager beginnings in Kona 25 years ago, the University of the Nations has now multiplied into a truly global university, with 282 different types of courses offered in 51+ languages and held at 314 locations in more than 95 nations worldwide. Currently, approximately 115,000 students are registered within the global U of N system (June 2001 Provost's Office statistics).



During the 25th celebration day (October 11, 2002), through worship, presentations, "talking story" (as we say in Hawaii) and prayer, we remembered that "the Lord is Good" and "He is the same yesterday, today and forever." One of the most exciting events for me personally was when we went to prayer with the students and staff, asking the Lord, "What is on Your heart for the future?" We broke into small groups and prayed in a manner familiar to YWAM around the world, listening to God as He once again spoke His plans for the future and challenged us to believe Him for more!



The event ended with a major celebration at the Plaza of Nations. After experiencing a delicious Polynesian luau, we gathered to worship and witness the musical and artistic riches God has invested in the peoples and the cultures He has called to this place. The presentations began with the blowing of the conch shell and Polynesian chants welcoming the King of Kings to inhabit this event held to honor His faithfulness. A group of keikis (wee-WAMers) performed a hula; the Holo-Holo (Hawaiian) DTS gave gifts of dance and sign language; Korean women in vibrant costumes performed a traditional fan dance; the Kona DTS expressed the joy of the Lord through hip-hop; and a group of YWAMers from Cheju, South Korea led in new forms of worship through the sound of their drums and cymbals. The grand finale of the presentations came through the music of "Warriors, Come Home." Men and women of varied ages and nations took up torches circling the fountain (some of them dancing IN the fountain!), representing a new generation of warriors, ready to take the flame of God's truth to the nations.

Loren's closing message rehearsed the faithfulness of God and all the great things He has done over these past 25 years. But more importantly, he laid the challenge before us that beckoned a response, "Greater things will YOU do."

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