

First Unitarian Church welcomes openly gay minister

By Star-Advertiser staff

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The First Unitarian Church of Honolulu welcomed its new minister, the Rev. Jonipher Kwong, last month.

Carla Allison, church board president, said in a statement: "This is a historic moment for The First Unitarian Church of Honolulu, as we proudly welcome our first openly gay and Asian minister in our 59 years of existence. His zeal for social justice and spiritual guidance in helping our diverse church grow truly demonstrates in action our belief in the inherent worth and dignity of every individual.



**Jonipher
Kwong**

"The church is firmly committed to promoting diversity of all kinds — ethnic, racial, sexual orientation and religious."

Working in California for the past three years, Kwong gave his first sermon Sept. 11 at First Unitarian. He has extensive experience with nonprofit groups, financial management and fundraising, interfaith organization and social activism, the church said.

Kwong worked with the Interfaith Alliance Hawaii and the Counseling & Spiritual Care Center of Hawaii from 2005 to 2008. As the founding minister of 'Ohana Metropolitan Community Church, he lobbied for the passage of several anti-discrimination bills involving civil unions, housing and employment, the church news release said.