

## Feast Day of the Saints and Sovereigns: Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma



On November 28, the Episcopal Church in the United States formally celebrates the Feast of the Sovereigns His Majesty King Kamehameha IV (Alexander Liholiho) and his wife, Queen Emma Kaleleonalani. Both sovereigns were confirmed in the Anglican faith on that day in 1862 by the Rt. Rev. Thomas N. Staley, the first Anglican Bishop to arrive in the Hawaiian Islands at the invitation of Kamehameha and Emma. The Anglican Church in the Hawaiian Kingdom, originally formed as the “Hawaiian Reformed Catholic Church of Hawai‘i,” is the only Christian denomination to have been invited by native royalty to the islands to carry out missionary work among native Hawaiians in particular.

For both Liholiho and Emma, interest in the Anglican faith began at an early age. The king’s interest arose during a boyhood tour of England where he had seen, in the stately beauty of Anglican liturgy, a quality that seemed attuned to the gentle beauty of the Hawaiian spirit. The queen received a deep respect and admiration for her Anglican faith primarily through the faith of her hanai father, Dr. Thomas Charles Byde Rooke, an English physician who served in the court of King Kamehameha III. Liholiho’s and Emma’s Anglican faith was so strong that when they were married on June 19, 1856, they preferred an Anglican service, even though there were no Anglican churches in Hawai‘i. However, because of their insistence, an Anglican marriage service (the first of its kind in Hawai‘i) was performed at Kawaiaha‘o Congregational Church.

In November 1860, Kamehameha IV wrote to Queen Victoria “requesting Your Majesty’s approval of the establishment of the Anglican Episcopal Church within my Dominions.” The bishop of Oxford in England responded by sending Staley and two priests, who arrived on October 11, 1862. They then began preparations for a cathedral and school, and the king set about to translate the *Book of Common Prayer* into Hawaiian, and even donated the land for what later became the site of St. Andrew’s Cathedral.

Before Staley’s arrival, however, Liholiho and Emma had already embarked on the path of altruism and unassuming humility for which they have been revered by their people. The king and queen undertook the mission of soliciting enough funds to establish a proper hospital in Honolulu. Within a month, their personal campaign had raised \$13,530, almost twice their original goal. In 1859, the Queen’s Medical Center, named for Emma, was established; it is now the largest civilian hospital in Hawai‘i.

Liholiho and Emma’s personal life was marred by the tragic death of their four-year-old son and only child, Albert Kauikeaouli Leiopapa a Kamehameha, in 1862. Liholiho especially seemed unable to survive his sadness, although a sermon he preached after his son’s death expressed a hope and faith that was eloquent and profound.

Following the death of both her son and husband, Queen Emma took a new name, “Kaleleonalani,” which means “flight of the heavenly chiefs,” and dedicated herself to many worthy causes, among them, organizing a hospital auxiliary of women to help with the ill. She also established two schools for girls, St. Andrews Priory in Honolulu and St. Cross on Maui.

Emma’s work also included the capital development campaign for St. Andrew’s Cathedral. She journeyed several times to England where she and her friend, Queen Victoria, raised \$30,000 for the construction of the cathedral. Archbishop Longley of Canterbury remarked on Emma’s visit to Lambeth: “I was much struck by the cultivation of her mind. . . . But what excited my interest most was her almost saintly piety.” The cathedral was completed after Emma died and named St. Andrew’s in memory of the king, who died on the feast day of St. Andrew, November 30, 1863, at the age of 29. Emma died on April 25, 1885, at the age of 49 on the feast day of St. Mark. Both were given royal funerals and were buried at Mauna‘ala, the royal mausoleum in Nu‘uanu.