

"I am the vine, you are the branches; abide in me and you will bear much fruit." John 15:5

Vine & Branches

Monthly News from St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, 720 N. King Street, Honolulu, HI 96817 • Phone (808) 845-2112

January 2019

Love Itself Is The Gift

The Rev. David J. Gierlach

Just the other day, a friend stopped by.

This person once had millions of dollars, a fine home in Kahala, a new Mercedes every other year and more jewelry than some jewelry stores.

Through a series of bad luck, bad judgment, a bout with addiction and some unforeseen illnesses, this friend came to see me from the houseless shelter that is now her home.

Having lost everything, she is coming to believe that life is more than the material stuff she used to worship, and is wondering what new lessons life has in store for her.

Letting go of everything, willingly or unwillingly, is what brings us here tonight.

Now I grant you, thinking about letting go of everything on a night like this is ironic since so many of the days and nights leading up to this time together has been about everything but letting go.

These last weeks have seen many of us up and down the store aisles, having wrestled with our gift giving and meal planning and relative and friend airport picker upping...so that many of us arrive at this night exhausted, flustered and maybe a little uptight, hoping I am sure, for that gold standard of a good sermon: one that has a strong opening, a strong closing, and as little as possible in between!

And yet, letting go is exactly what God does in Jesus — the One in whom all things are held together, lets go of it all, becoming a helpless child, born in a barn, to an unwed teenage girl; who, in the words of St. Paul, "though he was rich, yet for our sake he became poor, so that by his poverty we might become rich." 2 Cor. 8:9.

But the riches promised by God don't look anything like the riches lost by my friend.

The riches of God look something like Della and James, who are newlyweds.

They are madly in love.

They are also as poor as can be.

When their first Christmas comes around, they have nothing with which to buy gifts for their beloved.

But each of them has a prized possession.

James has a golden pocket watch, given to him by his grandfather, while Della has thick red hair that has grown past her waist.

Secretly, James sells his precious watch and buys Della a beautiful silver comb for her hair, while at the same time, Della shaves off her hair and sells it, so that she may buy a gold chain for James' watch.

On Christmas Eve, the two stare at each other, baffled by the extravagant — but completely useless — gifts they have given each other.

Their sacrifice, their letting go, is completely pointless of course; unless love itself is the gift. C. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, 67, paraphrased.

It's like the story of Babette, a French woman, one of Paris' finest chefs, who loses everything in the political riots of 1870s France: her restaurant, her family, her livelihood, all of it, gone.

She heads to Denmark, into the farming country, and is taken in by a community headed up by two nuns, old women who have devoted their lives to God.

When Babette arrives, the small community is old and falling apart with petty arguments.

Babette tries to cheer them up, but to no avail.

One day, a letter arrives.

It seems Babette has won the Paris lottery and the prize is 3 million francs.

Babette decides immediately to treat her



The Right Reverend
Robert L. Fitzpatrick
V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend
David J. Gierlach
Rector

The Reverend
Imelda S. Padasdao,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Dr.
Gerald G. Gifford.
Rector Emeritus

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,
Cantonese Language Priest

Hsiao Ying "Ajaon" Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

Jennifer Beckham
Parish Administrator
Editor and Layout
Music Consultant

Ken Yamasaki
Senior Warden

Mosese Langi
Junior Warden

Stuart Ching
Secretary

Leyna Esaki
Treasurer

Website:
www.stelizabeth720.org

Email:
stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com

hosts to a proper Paris dinner, and proceeds to buy the finest china and glassware, she imports an entire set of dining room furniture along with silverware and linen table cloths, the most succulent meats, the finest cheese and cases of grossly expensive French wine.

The Danish peasants stare in amazement at the extravagant feast placed before them.

At first they are scared, even suspicious, but as the night goes on, the mood softens, and after a while, forgiveness and joy surround them all.

Finally, slightly drunk, they all stumble out into the village square, where they form a circle around the fountain, and sing and dance together.

“After all these years, they have finally touched the well

An extravagant waste?

Perhaps.

Unless love itself is the gift.

When we take a gander at our world, with starving children in Yemen, a disparity of wealth in our country that might make Louis the 16th blush, with a political divide so wide some families cannot even sit at a Christmas meal together, you might ask yourself if the event we come to celebrate this night; this miracle of God becoming a human being, is also nothing more than an extravagant waste?

After all, what has changed in 2000 years?

There remain wars and rumors of wars, famine and hatred and pain. What did the incarnation, this miracle of God becoming human, accomplish?

Perhaps it is this.

You know the story of the prodigal son I am sure: the younger son who asks for his inheritance now, before dear old dad has died, and who then heads off into a far country and blows it all!

We often think that the father in that story represents God.

But what if God is not the father in the story, what if God is in fact the prodigal son — the one who squanders himself, for us, for our sake? K.

Rahner, paraphrased.

What if the nature of God is to pour herself out, freely and with abandon, regardless of the cost, regardless of the pain?

What if my pal Fr. Bob Capon is right, that God “is not our mother-in-law, coming to see whether her wedding present china is chipped.

What if God is a funny old uncle, with a salami under one arm and a bottle of wine under the other, and we wait for him, not in fear and trembling, but only because it would be such a pity to miss all the fun!”

R. Capon, The Parables of Judgment, 501, paraphrased.

What if the poet is right when he exclaims that, Love is recklessness, not reason. Reason seeks

a profit. Love comes on strong, consuming herself, unabashed.

Yet in the midst of suffering,

Love proceeds like a millstone,

hard surfaced and straight forward.

Having died to self-interest,

she risks everything and asks for nothing.

Love gambles away every gift God bestows.

-Rumi

What if we are called to be yeast, to be salt, to be light in this world — that loves with abandon?

And while our small efforts may not seem to make a wit of difference, what if, like the mustard seed, these small efforts will one day cover the world?

“Let it go” is only a whisper away from the words that brought all things into being: “Let there be.... light, water, humanity...”

Let go, of control, of anger, of resentments, of worry, of shame, of fear, of greed.

Let go of everything, and the mystery of creation opens to you. This is the great insight of the Word becoming a human being.

“There is nothing to be renounced or resisted.

Everything can be embraced, so long as you cling to nothing.

When you let it go, you go through life like a knife through a done cake, picking up nothing, clinging to nothing, sticking to nothing. And grounded in that fundamental innocence of your being, you can then be totally open, able to give it all back, even giving back life itself!

That’s what God is up to tonight.

That’s the invitation delivered to you tonight.

So very simple.

It only costs everything.” Bourgeault, at 70.

Because love itself is the gift.

+amen



"THE STUDENT ASKS THE RABBI WHY THE BIBLE TELLS US 'TO PLACE THESE HOLY WORDS' ON OUR HEARTS.

'WHY DOESN'T IT SAY TO PLACE THESE HOLY WORDS 'IN OUR HEARTS?'

THE RABBI ANSWERS, 'IT IS BECAUSE AS WE ARE, OUR HEARTS ARE CLOSED AND WE CANNOT PLACE THE HOLY WORDS IN OUR HEARTS.

SO WE PLACE THEM ON TOP OF OUR HEARTS. AND THERE THEY STAY UNTIL, ONE DAY, YOUR HEART BREAKS, AND THE WORDS FALL IN.'"

~ KURTZ, EXPERIENCING SPIRITUALITY, 146.

Coins for Kenya



Every Advent season our little ones don scary animal masks and follow up the main offertory with our offertory for Africa! All of the funds raised go to a few community groups in Bungoma, Kenya, a largely rural area very near Uganda. **This year our keiki raised, through your generosity, \$2160.00, which will translate into just about 220,000.00 Kenyan Shillings!** Given Kenya's average monthly wage of 6,500 shillings, these monies will go far and wide to help our friends with their cows, goats, chickens and crafts! Many many thanks, or, as they say in Kenya, asante sana!!!!

"To pray is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mystery that animates all beings, the divine margins in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living. As a tree torn from the soil, as a river separated from its source, the human soul wanes when detached from that which is greater than itself. Without the holy, the good turns chaotic, without the good, beauty becomes accidental." ~ Abraham Heschel



Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with January birthdays!

Lynette Shim	01/01
Enriqueta Haller	
Akimasa Eis	
Awaeliery Farata	01/02
Grand Olobwy	01/03
Leo John Pangelina	01/05
Serenity Michael	01/06
Vernon Anaya	01/07
Kama Wong	01/08
Donella Kleinschmidt	01/09
Rebecca Kleinschmidt	01/10
Charles Steffey Jr.	01/11
Genevieve Hayakawa	
Harry Kurosu	01/12
Charlotte Jarrett	01/13
Troy Esaki	01/14
Soo Kil Park	
Sylvia Rowland	
Tarla Francis	
Dawn Yadao	01/16
Shaianne Sunagawa	01/18
Elyas Badua	
Sharlene Yap	01/19
CharleySue Steffey	
Jane Leong	01/20
Bonnie Lu	
Melba Meyshine	
Rachel Marlow	01/21
Jennifer Beckham	
Jack Simpson	01/23
Mark Anderson	01/25
Imensy Eichy	01/27
Kermelo Cadee White	01/28
Susan Kau	01/29
Allison Marlow	01/31

Neighborhood Christmas Party!!



The neighborhood Christmas party was a blast and a half what with the actual **Santa Claus** making a guest appearance as nearly 60 youngsters received a gift, ate enough shave ice to sink a ship and then feasted on the finest hot dogs and pizza pie that money can buy!! Many thanks to all of **Santa's elves**



who purchased and wrapped the gifts and to those who supplied so much deeeelicious food! And after eating all those delectable foods, what a better way to end the day than bouncing around in the bouncy bounce!!!!!!!



CCA Awardees

"Congratulations to **Jerry Liu**, **Cyril Wong** and our own **Bill Eng** for their many (many many many) years of selfless service to the **Chinese Christian Association**. These three men have served in many responsible roles over the decades to keep this ministry (founded in 1876) going strong!!!!!! Great job to you all!!!!!!!!!!!!



WE ARE THANKFUL & BLESSED!!



The Iolani Elementary School Third Graders decided to go all in on helping the houseless this Christmas season. So these little ones gathered all kinds of wonderful hygiene needs, packaged them up into individualized grab bags, then wrote beautiful hand-made cards wishing those who received the gift a Merry Christmas, reminding everyone that everyone is a child of God. Way to go you youngsters!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Mahalo to **Special Olympic athlete, Audrey**, and her family for their generous gift of today's meal!!



Patton Courie's Pals



A Message from the Youth Coordinator

By Melanie Langi

Happy New Year! Hou'oli Makahiki Hou! King Hee Fat Choy!
Head Uut Aastat! Akimashite Omedetto Gozaimasu! Manigong Bagong Toan!
Ia Manuia le Tausaga Fou! Ia Orana I Te Matahiti Api! 'Ofa Ke Ke Ma'u Ha Ta'u Fo'ou!

If I missed anyone, please don't shoot me! Haha!

Wow! 2018 was a very challenging year for me. However I am ready and look forward to whatever challenges 2019 has waiting!

I'm excited to share with all of you that I have become a grandma (short for grandmaster) for the first time. We welcomed our **granddaughter Alazae Uti-Paulo** on Christmas night. She was the first born Christmas baby in Hawaii. Born approximately at 12:05 am. Congratulations to her parents my son Anthony and his girlfriend Nika!

Along with new life, came a New Year! For many of us island folks we welcomed the New Year with a bang! Literally! Fireworks across the island lit up the sky when the clock struck midnight. While many of us was in service celebrating the New Year with God first. Many of us look forward to the New Year, because of new resolutions we like to make with good intentions, but seem to always fall short of keeping them.

The birth of my granddaughter brought new life to me, her birth gave birth to a grandmother. Giving me a new sense of a new life. I'm embracing my new role as grandma, just gotta get used to the new title! I like Grandmaster instead.

Many of our keiki went back to school this week. Was yours as eager as mine were to return to school to see their teachers and all their friends? My kids couldn't wait to get out of the house...no more chores! Well, at least for today (maybe) I hope your children are refreshed and renewed and ready for the new quarter. Help continue to support your child's education. Help them be a better student, get better grades, be a positive community contributor and a positive role model. Make sure they get at least 8 1/2 - 9 1/2 hours of sleep at night, make sure they get breakfast to help fuel them for the day (many schools offer free or reduced breakfast and/or lunch). Help keep your child organized, effectively communicate with your child's teachers, help them with homework.

Don't forget to praise their efforts and accomplishments and always, always show them you LOVE them!

This year's Christmas party was a very huge success! It could not have been possible with the help of Nella Kliensmidt and all her fellow elves who went shopping at Santa's designated stores for all the boys and girls! They even wrapped the millions of gifts purchased. Thank you Nella and her elves! I would also like to say thank you to the Mahoe's for the Mickey Mouse bounce house. It's a hit every year! The kids love jumping in it. And it keeps them busy! Mahalo to our shaved ice makers Father David and his crew son Joey and daughter Tea! All the people who made food and helped in the kitchen, THANK YOU for your helping hands, and Big MAHALO for James Fitzpatrick for inviting a real Santa Claus to visit our keiki! I promise his beard was real!! I heard James was good last year and we'll see him in church more often this year! Lol!

Youth bible study took a hiatus in December, but we're back in full swing as planned. **Every Friday evening beginning at 7pm!**

Snacks included. Hope to see you there!

That's all for now!

Yours truly,
Melanie Langi



Sunday School News

By Sue Yap



Advent was quite a whirlwind of preparation - participating in the services by lighting the advent candles on the wreath and reading the opening prayer. During the Offertory, wild animals and beautiful mermaids collected monetary donations for our friends in Kenya! Thank you for your most generous donations each Sunday!



Christmas Eve was extra special with the melodious music program! And the beautiful sea of red poinsettias gracing the altar - thank you all!

On Christmas Day the crèche was complete - blessed and baby Jesus placed carefully front and center! The Advent wreath now with the white Christ candle shining brightly in the middle!

We are truly blessed for our wonderful ohana at St. Elizabeth's! As the miracle of the Christmas season ends and we look forward to Epiphany, we give thanks to all of you for the love and support of the Sunday school and music programs!

Blessed Epiphany and Awesome New Year!



NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC WORKERS

Exhausted by 2018? Make 2019 better. Volunteer at Wallyhouse!



It doesn't take much to lift someone else's spirit—and yours. Volunteering a couple of hours occasionally, or on a regular basis, at Wallyhouse is an opportunity to see the houseless and the hungry as real people in need, not simply as a problem the government needs to "sweep" out of sight.

Here's how it works:

As a volunteer you arrive sometime between 8am-noon or 2pm-4p, and stay for about 2 hours. On a normal day, you answer the door to whomever comes, often a houseless person, but also housed who are hungry, sometimes a donor, or even Archdeacon Steve. We answer with "Welcome! How can I help you?" If the response is,

—"I need food," we ask the person to complete the TANF Eligibility Log (TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families a federal assistance program). The log documents whom we serve and affects our eligibility for food from the local Food Bank. We offer canned goods, vegetables and fruit, water or juice, something salty and something sweet. (Our adept Charlie Kokubun, Harlan and Colette Arakawa are skilled at culling great stuff for our food bags.) This exchange may complete the visit, or maybe...you'll get added requests, such as:

—"Please charge my [portables]," which you plug into our charging station.

—"I brought my laundry," a service we offer to the local houseless. You bring in the bag and place it in our laundry area (or in the kitchen overflow area).

—"I came to pick up laundry." Take a look at the bags lolling on our awesome red leather couch. One of them will hopefully have their name tag on it. Remove the tag and hand over their sweet smelling, sparkling goods.

—"I came to pick up my [device(s)]". Find them at the charging station and deliver.

—"Hygiene." Our capable Niambi does a good job keeping up with toiletries in a basket nearby. Sometimes women ask for additional items which are also usually available nearby (donations for these items are always welcome).

—"A first aid kit." For months we had awesome little first aid kits, but unfortunately we are now out. (Another great donation idea.) But we do have some bandaids and alcohol wipes to offer.

—"I can't open these canned goods." No problem. In the top drawer by the door are those nifty little army can openers that work like a charm...if you know how. (One of our folks wears his like a charm necklace.) Or, offer to open the can(s) with the regular style can opener in that same drawer. (Can openers...another great donation idea!)

—"Something to wear." Most clothes are given out at the Saturday morning breakfast (another volunteer opportunity), but we do keep a limited selection of basic clothing items.

—"Do you have cold water and/or ice?" Yes, we do! It is available for the asking.

—"I need a bathroom (or phone)." If the church is open, direct the person there. We do not at this time offer bathroom or phone use.

BUT...we are actively working on our shower project. And we already have an art studio.

What we need are volunteers to tend to the needs at the door so that we live-ins can welcome folks into the studio and shower spaces.

What days? Any day is great but our greatest need is for Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. Or take Tuesday! You'll get to participate in our hot meal program, Kay's Cafe!

Occasional help? You can only offer a day here and there, or only once? That's terrific! Maybe you'll want to take on a special task of painting, or gardening.

Perhaps you have some other fresh ideas for how we can answer the call to bring about what Dorothy Day called "a revolution of the heart" through acts of mercy to our neighbors in need. It starts, she said, with each one of us. Thank you for your support. It allows us to nourish, in body, mind and spirit, the homeless and the hungry among us, not to mention ourselves.

