

"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

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V Bishop of Hawaii

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Priest Associate

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Cantonese Language Priest

Hsiao Ying "Ajaan" Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

Bill Slocumb
Parish Administrator

Ken Yamasaki
Senior Warden

Charles Steffey
Junior Warden

Leyna Esaki
Secretary

David Catron
Treasurer

Website:
www.stelizabeth720.org

Email:
stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com

To Whom Do We Belong?

This new year has me anticipating the summertime departure of my boy who's heading off to a mainland college. As those of you who have been down this road know, there is sadness mixed with excitement as a young adult ventures out into his future. Thinking about my son heading out on his own took me back to my leaving home, at the ripe old age of 19.

As the oldest child in the family and the first to leave, it was a pretty tough time for my parents. As part of the leaving, I made a family album with photos and jokes and the usual assortment of wise cracks (that you've gotten used to here with The Week That Was) -- as a going away present for my Mom and Dad. And on the inside cover, I put that famous reflection about children.

The one written by Kahil Gibran, responding to a mother's request that he speak to them about children. And part of what he says is this: "Your children are not your children. They are the sons and daughters of life's longing for itself. They come through you, but not from you, and though they are with you, they belong not to you."

Well, I heard later that my dad ended up in the bathroom crying, something I only saw him do just once before, at his dad's funeral. I expect I'll be in the bathroom myself this summer when Joey goes... Why do I ask you to indulge me in this trip down memory lane, with these ruminations of a dad with a soon departing son? Perhaps because "who we are" and "leaving what is familiar" and "seeking out what we are ultimately called to become" is at the heart of today's gospel.

Here's the story of 12 year old Jesus, who ditches family and friends who are all heading home to Galilee and instead makes his way back to the Temple in Jerusalem. Frantic parents, searching for three days, enduring two sleepless nights, out of their minds with worry, finally catch up with him, only to be dismissed with: "Don't you know I must be in my Father's house?" And all of this, it seems to me, poses the central question of our lives: To whom do we belong?

Jesus grasps from an early age that he belongs not to his mom and dad, nor to his job or profession, nor to a girlfriend or wife, he belongs to God. To whom do you belong? Here in Hawaii we often define "belonging" based on our different cultures. We pride ourselves on our various heritages.

The last 40 years has seen a wonderful rediscovering and reconnecting with the Hawaiian culture among both native Hawaiians and those of us who, although not Hawaiian by blood, share the love of this place and her people with our host population. Indeed, many of our ethnic groups remain tightly knit, well organized, and powerful forces in our lives.

The Chinese Christian Association has, for over 140 years promoted Christianity and Christian values primarily among the Chinese community, and it continues to generously give financial assistance to those who feel the call to ordained life.



The Chuukese community, many of whom struggle financially, comes together for each and every death, gathering scarce dollars, all to ensure a proper burial back home for loved ones who have died here. The power of clan and culture to form identities is undeniable and pervasive.

We all have our own experiences with it, and it's not always a good thing.

On the mainland the siren call of ethnic identity, particularly among white folks, has taken on ominous overtones, with a rise in white nationalist sentiment and too many folks succumbing to division and hate along racial, ethnic and religious lines.

But whether we are bound up in deeply rooted cultural identities that affirm life, or if we are embracing some of its worst inclinations of bigotry and distain, both circumstances are challenged by the One to whom we all belong. We are all of us invited to seek and eventually enter into a relationship with the Source of all that is; that undefinable, indescribable essence that holds everything within herself, that in which all that is exists. And while we use the shorthand name of "God," it matters that we constantly remind ourselves that what we actually speak of is undefinable depth, of the deep calling to the deep in us all.

It is "...a sense sublime, of something far more deeply interfused, whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and the round ocean, and the living air, and the blue sky, and in the mind of man." W. Wordsworth

At its root, this ground of all being may be glimpsed though the lens of two simple words: unconditional love. We all know what love with strings attached feels like.

Most of our experience with love, in either giving it or receiving it, is love with strings attached, and each clan and culture seems to excel at one or more particular types of strings. Whether it be controlling Jewish or Chinese mothers (a very rare breed I'm told!) or domineering Filipino or Polish fathers, love with strings attached is something we each of us know very well.

But unconditional love, a love that loves not because of what we do or who we are or how we behave, but a love that loves us simply because we are - this is the essence of God. The whole point of creation is the desire of unconditional love to share herself with her creation. We exist in order to receive unconditional love.

It's at the heart of Paul's letter today assuring all of humanity that: "Long before the earth's foundations were laid down, God chose us as the focus of his love, to be made

whole and holy by his love, adopting us into his family through Jesus Christ, taking sheer delight in it all!

And all God asks is that we accept this lavish gift of unconditional love that he gives through the hand of his beloved Son." Ephesians 1:3-4. (The Message, paraphrased).

Unconditional love doesn't mean a love that spares us from illness or death, divorce or betrayal, wars or arguments, fears or abuse. Unconditional love isn't a better version of Disneyland where everyone is happy, the sun always shines and the air is sparkling clean.

Unconditional love seeks far more from us; and it seeks far more for us. Unconditional love calls us out of the still too narrow constraints of clan and culture and into a life that puts complete and ultimate faith in that which calls us from the deep, that which embraces us, that Mystery whom we call God.

It is a risk to be sure, to take everything that comes at us, whether it be childhood traumas or present day riches, whether it be great days or worst days, in every and all circumstances, and to trust, one day at a time, that all of it is being made into something new, something healing, something powerful, by the love that has hold of every last one of us.

The unconditional love that is the very life force of all that is frees us to leave our clan and cultural caravans, frees us to open our hearts to the searching God, who travels any distance, pays any price, suffers any atrocity, in order to have us, one and all. I think this is what 12 year old Jesus might be saying to the rabbis in the Temple today.

It's what he means when he tells mom and dad, I have another Father, whose name is freedom. This is your freedom too. And so I ask you, fellow travelers: To whom do you belong? +amen



Pandora's Belief

*I believe in belief.
It drags us forward.
It cries on-ward.*

*Rising above the carnage.
Held in a carriage.
Wheels made of dreams.
Axels of aspirations.
Walls of goals.
And the horses that are bound by ropes of thoughts
are stallions shaped of feelings.*

*I believe in hope,
The last and most beautiful to leave Pandora's box.
untarnished by the evil trapped beside it.
Not unwrapped but pure.*

I believe in belief.



This remarkable poem is written by our own **Shellianne Steffey**, a young lady who has been with us since she was a very little girl. What a talent!!!!



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



So, what do you call two guys who's combined age is like 110 who put up an aluminum ladder in 40 mph winds and then climb up on da roof with no one HOLDING said ladder???? Genius you say????????? We gotta agree!!!!!!

Lucky for dem, Doug Ing happened by and came to the rescue, but not before falling down laughing..... then preserving it all on Kodachrome!



Miss Jaime and David Kaloi were in the holiday spirit as the food was plentiful and the gifts amaaaazing!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



Holiday Festivities!

Whelp, look what the canoe brought us!!!!!! Straight from the islands of Tonga, it was old St Nick himself, here to give out toys to all kinds of little girls and boys!!!! The neighborhood Christmas Party was a smash and many thanks to the many hands who helped wrap, cook, decorate and dance!!!!!!!!!!!!



Thank you wrapping crew for making quick work of several kajillion gifts that all were wrapped as if done by the pros at Macys!!!!!!!!!!!!



Even a couple of long lost elves showed up for the Christmas bash as **Swan** from Tahiti and **Joey T-G** came why to man a very busy shave ice station that sold out even though it was a coooooold and rainy day!!!!!!!!!!!!

Sunday School News...



Happy Blessed Epiphany to all! The Sunday School children had a very busy Advent, preparing for the gathering and sharing the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love with the children and families in Kenya, singing and collecting money during the offertory!

Also in Advent, the Sunday school participated in the opening service by reading a scripture and lighting a candle on the advent wreath as we counted down the four Sundays to Christmas Day.

On Christmas Day, Fr. David gathered the children forward for the blessing of the crèche and the 12 days of Christmastide began! "Joy To The World, The Lord is Come!!!!"

Thank you to all who supported the children and their efforts in giving and helping to share with our beautiful friends in Kenya. Now, the people in Kenya will be able to add a cow or 2 to their menagerie, couple goats, a flock of chickens, a lot of bee hives, plants....a lot of love!!!

So with the wise men reaching the tiny stable in Bethlehem, we start the season of Epiphany! Jesus the Light of the World, the baptism of Jesus ... and we look forward to Shrove Tuesday... February 25, 2020! Pancake Tuesday, also called Pancake Day, Shrove Tuesday, Fat Tuesday and Mardi Gras (which is French for "Fat Tuesday"), is the last day of feasting before Lent begins on Ash Wednesday! (February 26, 2020)



Blessed Epiphany!
Sue Yap



It was Christmas morning and all the keiki came up front to help bless the creche as the baby Jesus was laid in the manger.



The **Baro** children were baptized during Advent in the midst of a whole lot of family and friends who were part of this wonderful occasion!

Da Youth Report

Happy 2020!

I can hardly believe an entire year quickly passed us by. Before we know it, it'll be 2021. But let's not rush things.

How was your holidays? Hope all was jolly and well. On Dec. 21 despite our Hawaiian snow(rain) and no bouncer the show must go on! Our Neighborhood Children's Christmas Party was a hit! Everyone enjoyed delicious food, shaved ice, cupcakes and delicious musubi's from Aunt Nella Kleinschmidt! Thanks Nella!



We also had a special visitor from up north, bringing with him a present for every girl and boy who's been naughty or nice. Such a forgiving Santa. I wonder where he learned that from. Thanks Father Mafi! wink* wink*

It's that time again! Every three years the Episcopal Church holds an International youth event. This year's event will take place at the beautiful University of Maryland from July 7-11, 2020 where hundreds of youth will gather to draw closer to Jesus and his teachings. Twenty-four youth from the Diocese will be selected to attend this life-changing event. We are excited for those youth who have been selected!



I know our keiki just returned from winter break, but who's ready for Summer? Camp Mokuleia is back and registration for summer camp opened Dec. 1, 2020. Experience what it's like to live on the North Shore for a week. Scheduled June 7 to July 17, 2020. Open to grades 1-12. For more info come see me!

Lastly, reminder Friday Nights Youth Bible Study. 7pm. Come fellowship with us! See you there!

Until next month!

Your friend,
Melanie Langi

Notes from the Catholic Workers

Wallyhouse Peace Garden

Certainty by David Catron, TSSF

On my way from bedroom to kitchen one morning, in the pre-dawn darkness, I stubbed my toe against a large object on the floor. Too sleepy to care, I resolved to return later to see what it was, but I forgot. Two or three days and stubbed toes later, I procured a small flashlight to see my tormentor. The box was labeled:

CERTAINTY Underpads
Waterproof moisture barrier helps keep beds dry

On the “Tabs and Wafers in Los Angeles” edition of the Liturgist podcast co-host Michael Gunger defined idolatry as the certainty of God’s location, as in the golden calf, in an idea, in our Creed, in this or that place, when, in fact, God is everywhere, or nowhere. Not so much because we guess wrongly or miss the mark, as much as everywhere and nowhere are human constructs. And who says God has to play by our rules? For example, when we reference God by pointing skywards.



Werner Heisenberg, German physicist, in the 1920s, promulgated what became known as the Uncertainty Principle. This states it is not possible to accurately measure both the momentum (velocity) and the position of a particle at the same time. If the momentum is measurable and known, position is not, and vice versa. The most that can be known is the probability of one when the other is accurate. This is because the very act of measuring alters the result. Intellectually, we imagine there to be an exact value for each at any moment, but we cannot know both simultaneously. This result has nothing to do with inadequacies in the measuring instruments, the technique, or the observer. And if we make the attempt anyway, we alter what is being observed.

The Uncertainty Principle is widely accepted; even I can understand it. Why, then, do we insist on certainty? Because, to our western minds, uncertainty feels very much like failure. Yet uncertainty is our friend. It spurs us on the road to understanding and serves as a guard rail against dogmatic solutions. Let me illustrate with a true story: On the way home from the supermarket recently with Niambi, we encountered a young man walking toward us. His shirt was unbuttoned, and we could see he was wearing a bra. A black one. Curious, I asked of no one in particular “Is that a man or a woman?” “Why do you care?”, came Niambi’s reply. She had a point. Why indeed?

I sought to label that person broadly as gay or straight. By doing so, I reduced him (her?) to a cipher, deprived them any other characteristics, be they good or bad, that they might have had. I attempted to throw up a barrier between us that would be hard to remove were I to see them again.

2020. Two thousand twenty. Twenty-twenty: what we call perfect vision, but in this case, a new year. A new decade fraught with uncertainty. Puddle Pads, a reminder to not judge, to not assume knowing but instead to remember that uncertainty is an invitation to jump in and risk relationships. Don’t fear, we are all in it together, dependent on one another and on God.