

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

# Vine & Branches

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

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Edition  
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## The Coming of the Holy Spirit

(Acts 2:1-4) (v. 3)

*Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them.*

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 Peter S. M. Fan,  
Cantonese Language Priest

Fr. Mafi Vakameilalo,  
Priest Associate

The Venerable Steven Costa,  
Diocesan Arch-Deacon

The Reverend Deacon  
Viliami Langi, Deacon

Hsiao Ying "Ajaon" Chen  
Choir Director

Marie Wang  
Organist

Bill Slocumb  
Parish Administrator

Cathy Lowenberg  
Senior Warden

Charles Steffey  
Junior Warden

Leyna Higuchi  
Secretary

David Catron  
Treasurer



David and I had the opportunity to hear **Christopher Senyonjo**, a retired Anglican Bishop of Uganda, say regarding his ministry in support of human dignity for all people, "I want to be a flame that starts a fire."

Fire has been a consistent theme throughout my career as an artist. I am never satisfied how I portray it in a quest to incarnate passion. Early on I began with making images of the fire of hell, then of God in the bush, and then experiences of personal hell.

A more positive and playful understanding of fire came to me through a class at the **Graduate Theological Union** in Berkeley, California, in the 1980s. I had the privilege to take a class entitled "Biblical humor and clown ministry," offered by the biblical humorist and storyteller, **Dr. Margie Brown**. A few of us were offered the further opportunity to learn the art of fire-eating, which included dancing a flame of fire on our tongues. Intrigued by the symbol of fire, of its danger and power, of its destruction and nurturance, I readily took the option.

Our small group met with Margie outside class twice a week. We began each session with centering and breathing exercises, we learned how to make fire sticks, we learned proper environmental conditions. Above all we learned how to spot one another, for **fire-eating** should never be done alone.

When the day came to extinguish the flaming fire sticks in my mouth, I burned myself severely and couldn't eat solid food for over a week. Margie comforted me, "It only takes one time. You will never burn yourself again because you now know what to do." She was right. I learned not to clamp my mouth on the fire but to hold it gently before exhaling the flames.

Responding to the **call of the Holy Spirit** to serve the poor in Brazil and the US has not been so different from experimenting with fire. The Spirit has brought many blessings, but the journey has also led to some very dark places inhabited by evil, particularly the poverty and addictions we see daily in the people we serve. Surviving spiritually depends on the protection and illumination of the Spirit, invoked through **daily meditation and prayer**, and actualized through community. Fire-eating is not safe to perform alone and neither is ministry.

The closer we come to doing the work of the Spirit, the more determined the Evil One is to stop us through our human frailties, our fatigue, our hubris, our disappointments, turning us against each other, doubting ourselves, undermining our ministry. We use the blame game against others and ourselves, but our communities of support **remind us to breath** and to let go. It is not about me, but about serving in the way called forth by first, our current faith community such as the street church in Rio de Janeiro, or the Catholic Worker communities in which we have lived, or now at **St. Elizabeth's**; and second, by the community of those served, such as impoverished children, the homeless, or immigrants. The work of the Spirit does not belong to me but to the **Body of Christ**. It is not a matter of what I think the Brazilians, the homeless, the lonely, need but to allow them to evoke our gifts.

David likes to think negative outcomes are simply the result of character defects that could be corrected with effort. But our personal efforts to often fail. Our only hope of success is in keeping ourselves grounded in community. Even so, **the Spirit is fire**, potentially dangerous **and ungraspable**. It cannot be managed by any of us, only held lightly if intently.

Bishop Senyonjo's fire will heal his homeland, but not before it consumes everything he holds dear, career, home, respect. Called by the Spirit to an itinerant life of service in Brazil and the US, I modeled my response by creating **the art quilt imaged above**, meditation on love. While earlier works focused on suffering, this one is about transformational love. It is a depiction of the whole self set on fire, not with flames of hell, **but of heaven**.

- barbara bennett

The beautiful words of **barbara** and **David's** reflection on Pentecost are only heightened by the fires being set throughout the world these days. The fires of pandemic, the fires of rising authoritarianism, and the fires of racism all seem to be on the rise. Fire can be both destructive and healing. As we confront today's fires, may we seek the unity to which we are all born. May we find in the sacred Trinity the truth of our situation; that we are all children of God, this God who is unified in diversity; this God who loves us in our diversity. Would that we would love each other in diversity. The way forward will not be easy. We need to seriously undertake reparations to the people of African American heritage who have for hundreds of years been systematically excluded from the bounty of this land. Those deprivations can only be remedied with meaningful financial restitution given not out of pity but out of justice. We need to reform our tax system so that the people at the top begin to pay significant taxes after 40 years of contributing far too little to the commonweal. We need to vastly reduce the size and scope of our military and spend those funds on healthcare, infrastructure, and education for our people. Finally, we need to oppose the growing authoritarian tendencies in Washington DC and reject the hatred, the anger, and the lies. We are followers of Jesus. Therefore, we are commanded to lift up the poor, to care for the needy, and to seek justice and peace everywhere we go. Not since our faith was founded has it been more imperative for us to live our faith. And when we do, the fire that burns will be the fire that heals.

- david+

## You've Heard of Famous Amos...

The famous **Kay** of **Kay's Cafe** and the nearly equally famous **Archdeacon Steve** are hard at work cooking up gourmet grinds for the hot Tuesday lunch. What with the virus, upwards of 100 plates go flying out da door!



In these days of pandemic and pandemonium,  
so often fueled by our too often insistence  
that love, compassion and kindness are mere pipe dreams,  
perhaps taking a moment to stare at,  
to absorb,  
to even enter into,  
the magnificent beauty that greets us at every turn,  
perhaps in that moment,  
we might be still,  
and give thanks.



Say hello to our new neighbor and tenant! What a cool looking building dedicated to caring for the health needs of the most vulnerable! **Congrats Kalihi Palama Health Center!!**



## Masked Helpers



What with Wallyhouse serving a trillion bags before lunch each day it sure is nice to have the strong backs and willing arms of these two masked men as we take in literally tons of Foodbank food for folks in need! The Lone Ranger and trusty pal Tonto are absolutely AMAZING!!!!!!

## A Scholar, Athlete and Gentleman!!!

He's not only tall, dark n handsome, he's whip smart and a super nice guy! Congrats to 2020 Kamehameha High School grad **Kama Wong** ... and to you too tutu **Lani Kealoha**!!!!



## St. Francis Arrives!

The first thing we sought for our, at the time, dreamed peace garden was a St. Francis statue. In October 2019, the navy exchange garden center offered to order one for us. Finally, on June 1, we were notified it had arrived. Our good Friend, Bob Broderick, generously drove to the exchange to pick it up. It took 4 men to get it into the truck, and 2 men and a woman to get it out once at St. E's. St. Francis is now happily placed under the plumeria tree where he can oversee our beautiful garden. Hooray!

