

*"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

**March 2020**

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  
Viliani 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

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## Wide Open

A few years ago, an evangelical Christian from Dallas, in his thirties, with a wife and young children, was diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer that produces toxic blood cells.

After several years of treatment, he only got worse, finally reaching the point where he was resigned to an early death.

At that moment, a bone marrow donor match is found, the new marrow cures him, and now he is cancer free. Being a man of faith he sees his cure as a sure-fire proof for the existence of God. And, he really wants to meet the person whose marrow, and kindness, saved his life.

He finally does meet her, and much to their mutual chagrin, she is an atheist. Which causes our now healed fellow no end of consternation, because he comes from a branch of Christianity that says unless you accept Jesus as your personal savior, you are doomed.

"There isn't anything she could do that I wouldn't forgive," he says of his donor, "my love for her is unconditional!" "But I don't know how to deal with this problem of her lack of belief."

The donor replies, "I believe in goodness — and somehow your Jesus is just too small for me, your rules too restrictive, you exclude too many people of good will, so no, I will not be accepting Christ as you hope I will." And there the two leave it.

Great friends, but with an impossible chasm between them. And I could only think, listening to this story, how sad that the man's God is so small, and how the woman, though she claims to be an atheist, is probably closer to the mark of who Jesus calls us to be than most people. How sad that our evangelical friend cannot see that he is making himself more compassionate, forgiving and just than he allows God to be — since he'll forgive the woman anything, while his notion of God doesn't allow God to do the same.

We are entering the season of Lent, a time of introspection, of entering into the larger mind of God, of deepening and broadening our understanding of just who God may be.

And perhaps the best place to start is by acknowledging that we each of us, from time to time, put God in one box or another — our human need to be in control constantly tempts us to define God in ways that justify ourselves, while condemning others.

Sister Joan Chittister puts it this way: "To close ourselves off from the wisdom of the world around us in the name of God is a kind of spiritual arrogance exceeded by little else in the human grab bag of mistakes.

It makes life a kind of prison where, in the name of holiness, thought is chained and vision is condemned. It makes us our own gods. It's a sorry excuse for spirituality. The sin of religion is to pronounce every other religion empty, unknowing, deficient and unblessed.

It ignores the call of God to us through the life and wisdom and spiritual vision of 'the other.'



When we close our eyes to the wonder of God showing up in the unlikeliest of people; when we shut our hearts to she who is different, we shut our hearts to God. A willingness to see and hear God in every human being really does matter.

Openness to the presence of God in others is the essence of true prayer. But in order to open our hearts, we need first to learn to open our lives.

A white fellow who's never shared a meal with a black man is a fellow who's missing an opportunity to grow. The man who has never worked with a woman as an equal, or better yet, as a boss, is deprived of insight into the other half of the world.

The comfortable monk who never serves soup at a soup kitchen, or clerks in a thrift shop, or spends time in inner-city programs, lives in an insulated bubble.

The adult who never asks a child a question (and really listens to the answer) is doomed to go through life out of touch and uneducated by the innocent among us.

Openness is the door through which wisdom travels — where real prayer and understanding begins.

Openness is the mountaintop from which we see that the world is so much bigger, so much broader than ourselves, that there is truth out there that is different from our own, yet it is truth.

The voice of God within us — is not the only voice of God. And there is this about 'openness.' Openness isn't about being sweet and nice. Nor is it polite listening to people with whom we disagree.

It's not even simple hospitality or a grudging tolerance. Openness is the gracious abandonment of the mind to receive new ideas, to be amazed by new possibilities.

Without openness, real prayer is not possible, because God comes in every voice, is present behind every face, waits in every memory, and lives deeply in every struggle.

To close off any of these is to close off the possibility of becoming new again ourselves." Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light, Joan Chittister, paraphrased.

That closing off is what gets us tossed out of the Garden in the first place. God says: "Enjoy every tree in the garden — eat your fill! But stay away from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil!" And I ask you, have you ever wondered what those other trees were like?

Was there a tree of joy? A tree of service? Of love? Of compassion? Are there trees of intimacy and imagination and art and song and feasts and wisdom and peace?

But all of those trees wither from our grasp when we choose to know the difference between good and evil. We aren't equipped for it. We aren't good at it.

Because judging others leads to "us against them," to nationalism and racism and sexism, which all lead to death: dead relationships, dead hopes, dead dreams.

Deciding what is good and who is evil puts every one of us in a place that only God can truly occupy.

That's why Jesus says let the weeds and wheat grow together, pushing back against our love affair with the speck in my neighbor's eye while ignoring the log in my own eye.

Which really is the central problem with pretending we know the difference between good and evil. As soon as we decide that we do, we close everything else off. Is that why it's called original sin?

Given a paradise with its boundless possibilities, it's never ending openness to new things and new ways of understanding life and each other, we choose the narrow, the boiled down, the "my way or the highway."

That's the dilemma our "born again" evangelical cancer survivor has with his atheist bone marrow donor.

The evangelical loves this donor unconditionally and no matter what the donor may do, that unconditional love will never leave the heart of the evangelical.

And yet, that same fellow believes that unless the atheist "accepts Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior" she is likely to be doomed by the god he believes in.

The God who ironically, is less capable than he is of love, of compassion, of simple human decency.

This Lenten season, perhaps we can make it our common goal to open ourselves wide to the Spirit of God that moves where it will, who loves all of creation, who welcomes everyone — simply because that is the nature of God!

This Lenten season, let's ask for the grace to see God in the hidden places, to find him among the least, the lost and the left behind.

We are each of us called to a splendid dignity, because God delights in all creation; in every grain of sand, and in every human being.

Lent is the season to reclaim that truth. It's the season to say: Thanks be to God!

+amen



## Happy Birthday

*God's blessings on those with  
March birthdays!*

Colin Wong	03/01
Kifenin Dopich	
Maile Nicholas	03/02
Obeyi Helly	03/03
Damien Ballesteros	03/04
Roy Chee	03/05
Doreen Ching	03/07
Marites Unarce	
Aadriana White	03/09
Christy Horikawa	03/10
Arleen Young	03/12
Lillian Tyau	03/13
Yonlene Simpson	
Istina Eichy Muludy	
Sarah Bush	03/14
Ongolea Sungalu	
Ruthann Sorcey	03/16
Haku Blaisdell	03/17
Miriam Hue	
Miranda Young	
Ensen Repaky	03/22
Dorothy Eichelberger	03/23
Isabel Padasdao	
Anaseini Lino	03/28
Gerald Lau	03/29
Jefirstson Nixon	03/30
Brian Kau	03/31

**Me**

By Shellieanne Steffey

Me.

My name is shellie.

I am a child of words, of books, of music, of life, of snow,  
of orenda, and sunshine.

A child of hardships survived through with help of our lord the divine.

I'm a learner, a seer, a sister, and a daughter.

Born a gift for my father.

A gift box baby.

I come from a house built of hands

My playground is the church, a daughter of the cross

I am; I've trudged through tragedy, bent down low wishing for the final blow,

I've held myself high and whispered to my brother I spy,

I spy a mother whose label is a lie.

I've watched my father die.

I held my brother to me as we laid there in the house built of hands to cry.

I dream of words, of wisdom, longed for knowledge.

I've wandered invisible lands, and made unbelievable plans,

I've seen the orenda in the ordinarys,

I've walked with an angel (gods fairys).

I live surrounded by violence and hatred and tragedy  
my heart's edges so raggedy;

I live in a house built of hands.

The foundation a cross.

The people underneath as close to my heart as the steeple above.

I am a dove.

I live in a place uneven but i made it through worse and we will make do.

As they say a triangle is the strongest shape in nature.

I grew fast when i was young.

I had no time to slowly mature.

Perhaps because at birth i was premature.

I come from pain and sorrow

But with the help of the big man in the sky

I (a sparrow) learned to fly

My pain and hardship made a path for me in worship,

in the house built of hands like a house of cards one ace at a time i built my plans,

I found support to pull me out of my invisible planes switched out for a real plane

to fly me to the stars and shake hands with the big man in the sky



# A Supercalifragilisticxpealadotious Shrove Tuesday!!!!!!

It was a gorgeous **Shrove Tuesday** with a fantabulous spread of sweets and meats to tide us over the next 40 days!! Thanks to our many cooks and preparers and all around advice givers!!!!



## Our Youth Hard at Work!!!

Our gang is going gangbusters as da yutes work off their collective okoles (Bottoms for our international readers...) as they save dough to make the trip this summer to America!!!!

The cost is A LOT and so far these sweaty saints are doing great to make their goal. Most likely the planned June Bank Robbery will be cancelled.....



# Saturday Breakfast Besties

Say hello to **MIKE**, a Catholic Worker from a place called IOWA. Never heard of it. But word is people live in such a place!

Mike came for a visit and shared his 20+ years as a Catholic Worker with all of us one Saturday morning!!!!

**Delphine and Ronnie, Cathy and Lynette** enjoyed his company!!!!!!!!



"I used to pray that God would feed the hungry, or do this or that, but now I pray that he will guide me to do whatever I'm supposed to do, what I can do. I used to pray for answers, but now I'm praying for strength. I used to believe that prayer changes things, but now I know that prayer changes us and we change things."

- Mother Teresa

Do not be daunted  
by the enormity  
of the world's grief.  
Do justly, now.  
Love mercy, now.  
Walk humbly, now.  
You are not obligated  
to complete the work,  
but neither are you free  
to abandon it.

- the Talmud



# Sunday School News...



Lent! The children will meet in the church and participate in the Lenten service with the processional and opening readings and blowing out one candle on the Lenten wreath then going to their classrooms! On the first Sunday in Lent all the candles on the 'crown of thorns' wreath will be lit, and each Sunday the wreath will grow 'darker and darker' as another candle is extinguished...counting down to the alleluia of Easter when the Christ candle will shine brightly and the light will once again fill the church! The readings are from a series of Lenten calls to worship by Paul Dyck..

During the 40 days of Lent, the color in the church is purple, floral memorials are not on the altar and the 'alleluias' are omitted from the service.

The first Sunday in Lent the children will make a joyful noise unto the Lord and sing the Offertory hymn - The B-I-B-L-E Song.

Blessed Lent to all!

Sue Yap

Our Lenten project, The children will be working hard on their "Garden For Lent"

## GARDEN FOR LENT

Plant three rows of peas.

Peas of mind  
Peas of heart  
Peas of soul

Plant four rows of squash.

Squash gossip  
Squash indifference  
Squash grumbling  
Squash selfishness

Plant four rows of lettuce.

Lettuce be faithful  
Lettuce be kind  
Lettuce be happy  
Lettuce really love one another

No garden should be without turnips.

Turnip for service when needed  
Turnip to help one another  
Turnip the music and sing

Water freely with patience and cultivate with love.

There is much fruit in your garden because you reap what you sow.

To conclude our garden we must have thyme.

Thyme for fun !  
Thyme for rest!  
Thyme for ourselves!

Do you have anything to add  
to our garden?



# Da Youth Report

Hello All!

Welcome March as we "March" into Spring! Is it Spring? Or we still in Winter? I dont know about you, but im loving this weather!

So, as many of you may already know, a select number (8) of our youth have been chosen to attend this years Episcopal Youth Event (E.Y.E) in July 2020. What is E.Y.E? E.Y.E is an international leadership event that takes place every three years for our young people in grades 9-12. This years event will be held in Maryland at the University of Maryland. But so much more than that, it is an opportunity for our young people from all over the country to gather together for fun, worship and learning. Truly it is a leadership event. Filled with activities, excitement, tons of new friendships and fun but most importantly building a personal relationship and foundation with Jesus and Gods promises.

The cost to get there is still being determined however the Diocese of Hawaii will pay 1/3, the congregation will pay 1/3 and the participants will pay 1/3.

To help the youth pay for their way, they are holding car washes each Saturday morning (rain or shine) from 9am to whenever (1pm). \$10 donations.

We are also planning a smoked meat fundraiser. Coming soon...mmmm! Listen to the weekly announcements for further information.

All the participants who work the fundraisers will share in the profits of the fundraiser.

On a last note: Youth bible study. Fridays 7pm. This seasons lesson. Tithing/Heart of worship. Join us, fellowship with us. Lets take the journey together!

Until next time

Your Friend,  
Melanie Langi



## SAVE THE DATES PLEASE!!!!!!!

Our super fantastic LENTEN SERIES Learning Our Faith Again...for the first time....begins Saturday February 29 at 10 am in the Conference Room and then continues with:



Saturday March 7 at 10 am: Holy Baptism and the Art of Dying

Saturday March 14 at 10 am: Holy Communion and the Divine in You

Saturday March 28 at 10 am: Faith and Society Part I

Saturday April 4 at 10 am: Faith and Society Part II

It's a chance to make your Lenten devotion something maybe more lasting than giving up wine and chocolate! A chance to dive in with other smart and searching folks into some of the depths of our faith. FULL REFUND IF NOT COMPLETELY SATISFIED!!!!

# Notes from the Catholic Workers

## Lost in Paradise

Whoops! You made a wrong turn and it will be eight miles before we can turn around. So I said to Michael when he veered onto the Likelike Highway (H3) to Kaneohe instead of staying on the H1 to Honolulu and home.

Michael Gayman came for a surprise weeklong visit from Davenport, Iowa where he manages the Oaks of Mamre Catholic Worker houses of hospitality. Michael, David and I were live-in volunteers together at the Oakland Catholic Worker, California, from 2009-10. Our ministry there included offering short-term housing to Latin American migrants, daily serving a hot take-out meal (rice, beans, vegetable) and weekly grocery distribution. When we separated, Michael went back to Iowa to open the Oaks of Mamre house and we returned to our ministry in Brazil. It has been a blessing to be re-united for a short time.



His visit has been a great excuse to enjoy the beauty of Oahu. On this occasion, we had gone for a walk on Nimitz beach and were headed home for dinner when we found ourselves going northeast instead of east. We were distracted because it was Shrove Tuesday and we were discussing Lent. Of how it is often a difficult time of struggle and feeling inadequate. We take on disciplines that don't go as planned and we get frustrated by our human failings. And yet, our intention is enough. God takes us as we are and adds "spice" so that what may appear to be failure becomes life-giving and hope-filled.

It was as if God wanted to demonstrate our words. We got on what seemed the wrong highway—and it was if we were determined to go "our way"—and because there were no exits we drove a good distance along the Ko'olau mountains. Michael had wanted to see the mountains but so far we had kept to the shore and his visit was coming to an end. Now here we were taking in the beauty of the Ko'olau. We could have focussed on his failure to go the "right way" or fretted over our lateness to get home but instead we took delight in the experience and were grateful.

Lent is like that. We take a bit of a detour from our normal routine. It can be frustrating and seem senseless at times. But stick with it and let God do the work. It promises to be an adventure of breath-taking beauty.

