

Holy Chaos

If our **official** motto at St. E's is "A House of Prayer for All People," our unofficial motto must be: "Don't talk stink about anybody here, 'cause we're all related!"

It's the first piece of advice I got when I showed up as your deacon in 2006 and I've been reminded of it from time to time ever since.

What I've learned over the years is how true our unofficial motto is. Not only are the Kaus related to the Aus and the Shims related to the Woos, but even a haole like me is related to you all because my wife is half Haka Chinese from Tahiti with ties to the Ings and the Yees.

I hear it too in our growing Chuukese community: she's from my island, my neighborhood, he's my dad's first cousin, my auntie's third child.

It's no different in the Tongan and Filipino communities, or in the Hawaiian and Japanese communities.

But lest we think it's just about island living,

"I read somewhere that everybody on this planet is separated by only six other people. Six degrees of separation between us and everyone else on this planet. The President of the United States, a gondolier in Venice, just fill in the names. I am bound to everyone on this planet by a trail of six people." Memorable quotes from *Six Degrees of Separation*.

It doesn't end there either.

Astronauts return from outer space, profoundly changed, having seen our fragile earth alone against the cold vacuum of space.

A crew of international astronauts reports: "The first day we all pointed to our own countries. The third day we were pointing to our continents. By the fifth day, we were all aware of only one earth." Johnson, *Quest For The Living God*, 181.

Another astronaut, while walking on the moon, holds up his thumb in front of his face and blocks the whole earth:

"Then you realize," he says, "that on this beautiful warm blue and white circle is everything that means anything to you; all of nature and history, birth and love. And you are changed forever." Id.

Today's the day to ponder our connections with each other because today God is putting the human family back together.

We split ourselves apart at the Tower of Babel, way back in Genesis, because humanity proudly reached up rather than reaching out.

God scattered us at Babel to show us we are not God; that we are children of God.

Our reading from Acts today tells us that God's first children, Jews from around the world, are gathering in Jerusalem.

They have for years lived in and learned the cultures and languages of other people in distant lands.

Now on pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the holy days, they speak their native tongues: a mix of strange and different languages: only to hear the disciples blurting out the Good News of Jesus; each hearing it in their own tongue.

The same Spirit that moved over the face of the waters at creation now blows in upon simple fishermen, men and women frightened and confused, cowering behind locked doors in a secret room, and creates in them a new way of God acting in the world.

At Babel, humanity pretended it was God. At Pentecost, the Spirit anoints us as children of God.

Babel scattered us so we might, in humility, discover who we are; Pentecost unites us, and enables us to live out who we are called to become.

And here is the best part: the unity that the Spirit creates is not uniformity.

My dear friend Pua Hopkins used to wonder about the famous American ideal of the melting pot: "That's all well and good," she would ask, "but who's doing the melting?"

In God's unity, no one is melting.

In God's unity, our diversity, our differences, our distinctions are all drawn together into a dance that celebrates what is unique in each of us.

In God's unity, chaos is transformed, into chorus.

This is the miracle of Pentecost! It's so crazy that the disciples are accused of being drunk!

St. Paul says it perfectly, explaining to the young community at Corinth that though they are many members, there is but one body.

"And so, the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you, nor the head to the feet, I don't need you. On the contrary, the members

of the body that seem the weakest are the most indispensable.”¹
Cor. 12:20-22

This is who we are becoming today, right here in lovely downtown Palama.

A group of relatives from far and wide, related, even though we may not know all the connections, speaking many languages, offering different customs, all within the harmony of God’s great mercy for each and every one.

It’s not an easy road.

Our first lesson tells of Moses getting burned out over a people who, now freed from slavery, can’t stand the breath of freedom.

Moses learns that what cannot be done alone, can be done together.

Moses chooses 70 leaders and the Spirit is given to the 70 Moses chose. But the Spirit isn’t finished. It lands on Moe and Curley as well, two *not chosen* by Moses.

Joshua, the Executive Secretary, is furious.

How dare the Spirit do such a thing?!

Yet that is exactly what the Spirit does.

It confounds you and me; Moses and Joshua too, because like the wind, God’s Spirit will do what it will do.

“In its surprise,” says one writer, “the Spirit is revealed as the maker of holy chaos.”^{3A Feasting On The Word, 6.}

Certainly we have felt this holy chaos right here in our midst.

Alone, that chaos can seem frightening.

But riding the roller coaster that is the Spirit, we can laugh and scream and feel our tummies drop, all of us together; and what was once a frightening solitary ride might now feel exhilarating, if we all pile in together.

That was the turn of events at Pentecost.

Frightened followers of Jesus, each deep in thought about how to save their own skins; each wondering about getting back to the family business; returning home; dissolving back into loneliness; in that very moment, the crazy, unpredictable chaos of the Spirit of God "entered into them the same way it had entered into Mary, the mother of Jesus, and for the same reason. It was time for God to be born again – not in one body this time but in a body of believers who would receive the breath of life from their Lord and pass it on, using their own bodies to distribute the gift." Taylor, *Home By Another Way*, 145.

God invites us into is a life that tells the truth about God's love for all creation.

By loving each other, as Jesus loves us, we in turn invite the world to say hello to this God of limitless love.

Like the very first witnesses, we not only have a story to tell, but in the telling, we are the story being told.

It's why we're gathered today in this "House of Prayer For All People."

This house, where we can't talk stink about each other, because God's reckless Spirit has made us, one and all, family to each other. Thanks be to God! +amen.

