

*"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

**April 2012**

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V Bishop of Hawaii

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Rector

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## Believe

*The Rev. David J. Gierlach, Rector*

The English language is a very efficient language.

If you ever attended a Mass in the Hawaiian language or French or Polish or any of a number of other languages, you may notice the service takes longer, because in many languages, more words or longer words are needed to convey certain ideas or convictions.

One reason English is so efficient is because one word can be used to convey all kinds of meanings.

It is one of the strengths of our language.

It is also one of its profound weaknesses.

I mention this because the rest of the sermon will be in Polish...

Actually, I mention this because right in the middle of today's gospel lesson is probably the best-known sentence in the entire Bible, and it hangs on probably the best-known word in the entire Bible.

You see it held up, as chapter and verse at football games – there's always somebody at each end zone with the sign: "John 3:16."

John 3:16 says this: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have life everlasting."

Here's the rub.

What does it mean to believe in Jesus?

Our word "believe" gets used in all sorts of ways.

If you're a Neil Diamond fan, you can hum along as he sings: "I believe in new beginnings, extra innings, brand new starts..."

the song my bride  
and I danced to at  
our wedding.

You can  
"believe" in your  
favorite team, or  
politician or that  
the latest chocolate  
pudding is the best  
ever.

Right after this sermon, we will rise  
and recite what we believe when we say the  
Nicene Creed.

So what is it to "believe" in Jesus?

Because our language often uses one  
word to describe many things, meanings  
can get flattened out; so that today, you'll  
hear people say that the belief needed for  
salvation is simply an intellectual assent; a  
brain-uttered "yes" to the idea that Jesus is  
the Son of God.

And perhaps because "I believe" is so  
easily said, perhaps that's one reason why  
Christianity seems to have lost so much of  
its power to transform lives, to transform  
societies.

So what is Jesus getting at?

The gospel lesson gives some clues.

To "believe" is to come to the light, as  
verses 20 and 21 so eloquently say.

To come to the light means changing  
who we are; so that to "believe" in Jesus, at  
least in a way that begins to break us down  
and out of old habits, of old certainties,  
is probably something more than simply a  
mental assent to an idea; but may compel  
an about face -- away from a life of self-  
sufficiency, of common sense and "the way  
things are," and a turning toward the upside  
down, and the counter intuitive; toward the  
odd ways of God.



# Rector's Message continued

It's the wheelbarrow story that I haven't mentioned for awhile. Everyone has a favorite story and this is mine.

About Jake and Harry walking downtown by those tall twin glass towers.

They are on the street and see a guy put a long skinny board between the two buildings, and the guy is ready to wheel a wheelbarrow across from one building to the next.

Jake turns to Harry and says, "you think that guy can wheel that wheelbarrow across that skinny board to the other building?"

"Sure, why not," says Harry.

"Well, do you believe he can do it?"

"Whatdayamean?"

"Go sit in the wheelbarrow while he rolls it over that board to the other building!"

Lent is that season of the year when all believers are encouraged to ask:

"When it comes to my faith, am I standing on the sidewalk or is my butt in the wheelbarrow?"

Because God so loves the world he gives us Jesus, because in Jesus, God climbs into the wheelbarrow with us.

It's not, as some of the more modern translations say that God loves us so much that he gives us Jesus; it's not that at all.

Giving us Jesus is the way God chooses to love us.

Annie Dillard is a favorite author of mine, and when I tell you about wearing crash helmets in church and being lashed to the pews, that's Annie Dillard.

She also says this:

God suffers the world's necessities along with us, and suffers our turning away, and joins us in exile." (For the Time Being).

It's what Paul is getting at in his letter to the Ephesians today.

"You were dead through trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, but now by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing."

God, it seems, is determined to have us.

So determined that the second person of the Trinity comes among us, becomes one of us, and takes on the worst of what we are as human beings; and when we have done it all to him, he turns to us and says: "I love you."

We Episcopalians are a polite group of worshippers.

I'm glad, because that's where I'm comfortable too.

We don't dance and shout in the aisles, nobody bursts out in tongues at St. Elizabeth's; and if they did, I probably wouldn't be here; nor would most of you, I suspect.

But perhaps by being so polite, we may sometimes miss the deep emotion, the sheer craziness, the mind-bending truth of our faith.

We polite Christians sometimes forget to remember that:

"Jesus isn't going to teach us how to be respectable, or even how to be "good" in the way our culture usually means the word.

Perhaps we forget to remember that following Jesus is not a program for self-improvement; it's an invitation to a community.

It's a radical dislocation from those relationships that create and continue injustice, death, and alienation so that we can be knit into relationships that bring healing, reconciliation, and life rooted in the eternal."

Sarah Breuer, *The Witness* (paraphrase).

Maybe that's why Nicodemus is holding his head in his hands as he stumbles away from his midnight encounter with Jesus.

Just before today's Gospel lesson, Jesus is having the more familiar part of his famous encounter with Nicodemus.

As you know, Nicodemus is a member of the religious establishment who's nevertheless fascinated with Jesus.

And Jesus tells him he needs to be born anew.

And Nicodemus protests that old men can't climb back into the womb.

And Jesus shakes his head at the density of this religious heavyweight.

Jesus tells him that strange and ancient story of God sending poisonous snakes to bite the angry Israelites, who prefer slavery to freedom; only to have God tell Moses to make a snake idol out of bronze, which, when the people look at it, cures snake bites. Nicodemus has a really bad headache. He's not getting any of this.

Are you getting a headache too...?

What is Jesus talking about?

"A pastor friend told me about the day a very disturbing telephone call came into the church office.

A part-time staff member, who had been out in his neighborhood walking his dog, had been mugged, stabbed in the heart and rushed to the hospital, and was now in intensive care with virtually no prospect for

# Rector's Message continued

survival.

When the word spread among the church staff, they gathered spontaneously to pray.

Standing around the altar, each person prayed.

My friend told me that he and the others offered sincere prayers, but mostly polite and mild petitions, prayers that spoke of comfort and hope and changed hearts, but prayers that had already faced the hard facts of almost certain death.

Then the custodian prayed.

My friend reported that it was the most athletic prayer he had ever witnessed.

The custodian wrestled with God, shouted at God, anguished with God.

His finger jabbed the air and his body shook.

“You’ve got to save him!

You just can’t let him die!” he practically screamed at God.

“You’ve done it many times, Lord!

You’ve done it for others, you’ve done it for me, now I am begging you to do it again!

Do it for him!

Save him, Lord!”

“It was as if he grabbed God by the lapels and refused to turn God loose until God came with healing wings,” my friend said.

“When we heard that prayer, we just knew that God would indeed come to heal.

In the face of that desperate cry for help, God would have been ashamed not to save the man’s life.”

## First Communion Class



Father David leads the First Communion Class in the conference room.

And so it happened.” -Tom Long  
If your belief is all in your head, keep believing.

If your belief pours through every cell in your body, keep believing.

If your belief is riddled with doubt, keep believing.

And as you believe, call out with the psalmist:

Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.

He gathered them out of the lands; from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Some were fools and took to rebellious ways; they were afflicted because of their sins.

Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

Give thanks to the LORD for his mercy and the wonders he does for his children.

+amen



**Stuart Ching** recently spoke about the History of the Church in the Sunday Adult Study.

*Rachel Naomi summed it appropriately when she said “Helping, fixing and serving represent three different ways of seeing life. When you help, you see life as weak. When you fix, you see life as broken. When you serve, you see life as whole. Fixing and helping may be the work of the ego, and service the work of the soul.”*



# Aloha Music Festival

March 19-22, 2012

*Everyone had fun learning, playing and jamming!*

We were delighted to once again host the Aloha Music Festival. Teachers of Mandolin, Banjo, Guitar, Bass, Fiddle and more spent the week with us and with folks from all over the community for lessons and jam sessions afternoons and evenings! What a blast!





## Attendance

3/4	Sunday 9:00 Eucharist	132
3/4	Ilokano Service	29
3/7	Wed. Healing Eucharist	29
3/7	Ilokano Service	22
3/11	Sunday 9:00 am Eucharist	120
3/14	Wed. Healing Eucharist	30
3/18	Sunday 9:00 am Eucharist	157
3/18	Chinese Eucharist	5
3/21	Wed. Healing Eucharist	26
3/25	Sunday 9:00 am Eucharist	229
3/25	Chinese Eucharist	5



## Congratulations!



Jerry and Millie Goo celebrated their 67th wedding Anniversary.

They topped off the week by joining us for our worship service and singing rousing renditions of “Oh, When The Saints Come Marching In” and Woody Guthrie’s “Jesus Christ.”

Many people who had never heard of St. E’s participated in this Festival and several expressed an interest in joining us for worship. Opening our doors appears to be opening hearts and that’s what our faith is all about.

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*Martin Luther King, Jr. said “Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don’t have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love. ”*



On March 25th, we welcomed into the Lord’s Family through the Sacrament of Baptism, **Juden and Meryelle Bonilla.**

# Sunday School News

Thank you all for participating in the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper as we prepare for all the Alleluias of Easter this Lenten season. Children have been traveling during spring break, Joey going to Tahiti and Ery going to the Philippines! We are all thankful that they are all back safely and all the children had a great spring break!

Thank you to Mrs. Fane Lino who has volunteered to teach the older children(12 years and up) the many bible stories and how to read the bible. The children have 6 regular students and sometimes an additional 2! It's great to have Mrs. Lino join the band of Sunday School teachers and helpers! Also helping with Mrs. Lino is Seine! Seine has a great way with the children and can help the children understand the stories. We are very thankful for the Lino family! Whatever would we do without Viliami and his guitar in music and handbells!!!

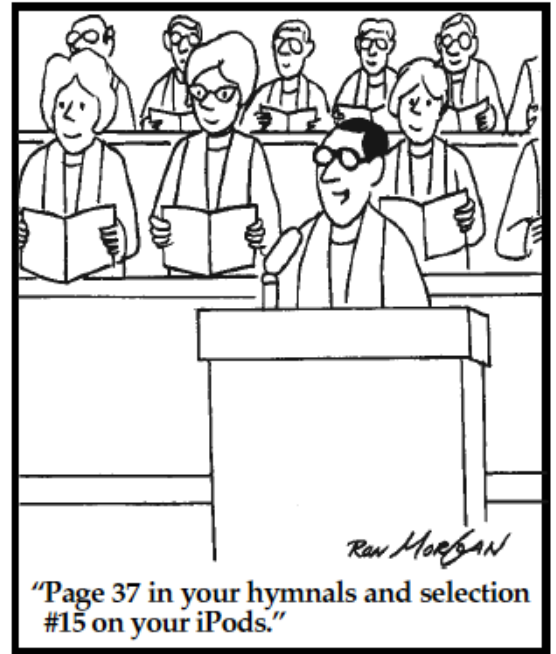
During Lent, it's a time to re-charge, re-think, reflect on what was, is and will be! Some of the children are also learning to appreciate new music, play new instruments, dance to the rhythm and sing! Many, young and old, have participated in the Aloha Music Camp this past week at St. Elizabeth's in Shim Hall. One group of students will share their handbell ringing on Easter Sunday as they play 'Jesus Loves Me' and the children not ringing will accompany them and sing during the offertory. Other students will get to share their music at another time.

Another group of students are participating in Fr. David's 'First Communion Class', a few students are getting a 'refresher' course in Communion, as they already take communion. All of the students will be the first to receive First Communion on Easter Sunday. We are very proud of these students and will be introducing them to you on Easter Sunday.

And during lent, the children are learning to follow in Jesus' ways, praying, being kind to one another and doing good deeds! They are trying!!!

Join the children with your walking shoes and slippers to march to the beat and drum on Palm Sunday, waving palm branches and olive branches! What a wonderful time to participate as a family with the children! Fr. David will be sure to have a special song for all to sing!

Take notice of the Lenten Wreath and the six purple candles that are slowly extinguished each Sunday, one by one with the readings at the opening of the service by the children. On Easter Sunday, we will see the Christ Candle shining for all to see the light!



from [JoyfulNoiseletter.com](http://JoyfulNoiseletter.com)  
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On Easter Sunday, as we sing the great Alleluias, the children will all sit in church throughout the service, anxiously waiting for the service to end.... The Youth Group is planning an 'eggsciting' Easter Egg Hunt for all children from 1 to 12 years old!!! The Youth Group will also be hopping around hiding the eggs and preparing baskets for all the children in church on Easter Sunday! Thanks to your generous donations and the donations from the Outreach Fund, there will be baskets for all the children from infants to 17 years old!!! (Big Bunny Jamie Chock will be in charge of all the hard-boiled eggs and coloring!!! If you want to have some fun dying the eggs, join Big Bunny Jamie after church on Palm Sunday in Shim Hall!!!)

Happy and Blessed Lent!

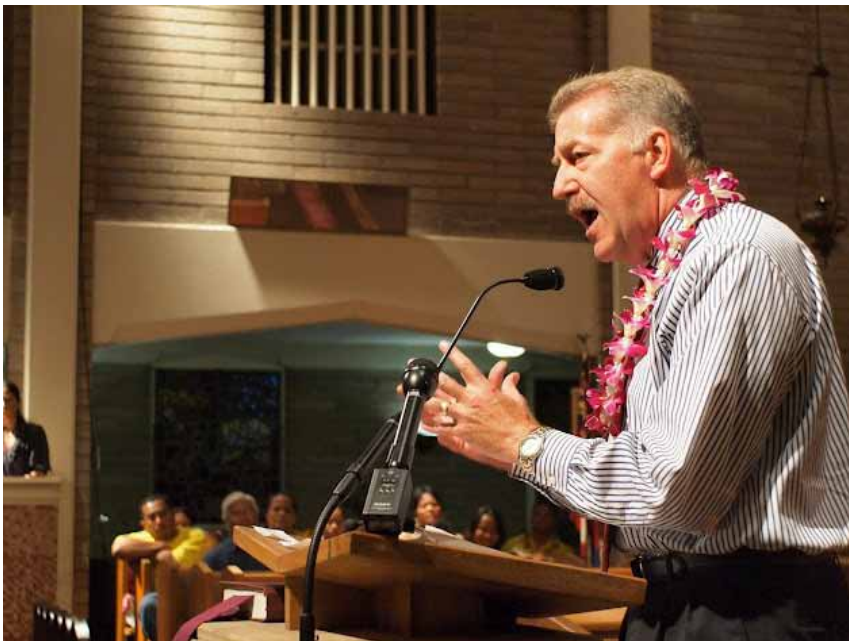
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*The Chinese Proverb says, "If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, serve somebody."*



This is a last reminder about our Parish ‘Sprucing Up’ Day this coming Saturday, March 31. We will be spring cleaning the Church, the grounds, and Shim Hall. We’ll start at 8:30 and end with lunch at 11:30. If you can be with us, please let either Kathy or me know by 3/28 so we can order sufficient bento lunches. To paraphrase a wonderful old saying, “Many St. Elizabeth’s hands make light work!” See you Saturday.

Preston Lentz  
Jr. Warden



Mayor Peter Carlisle spoke at the meeting.

## FACE Meets At Saint Elizabeth’s

Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE) met at St. E’s with an overflow crowd, standing room only, to hear community concerns about affordable housing, the immigration Dream Act and Pre-K classes for our keiki. The Mayor, the Chair of Honolulu’s City Council, State Senators and Representatives were all in attendance and spoke to those gathered about these issues. It was a rousing, uplifting evening and St. E’s FACE folks like Gretchen Jong, Sylvia Rowland and Chris Ling were right in the middle of the action!

## Born to Eternal Life

We extend our deepest sympathy to the family of **Eva May Ling Hue**, who passed away on March 4th. Services were held at St. Elizabeth’s.



## Happy Birthday

*God’s blessings on those with April birthdays!*

Shawnalyn Sunagawa	4/2
Brillan Tunlenkum	4/2
Sharon Oshiro	4/3
Kit Hawkins	4/6
Ka’alaneo Blaisdell-Higa	4/6
Concisa Bartoline	4/7
Joelynne Tagle	4/7
Father David Gierlach	4/8
Tasy Robert	4/8
Santereen Kom	4/9
Dolores Peralta	4/10
Alberta Eng	4/11
Belinda Chung	4/12
Flora Wong	4/12
Joseph Tom	4/14
Michael Young	4/14
Kalfred Yee	4/15
Lauren Ho	4/16
Puanani Woo	4/17
Kenneth Nagamine	4/18
Juan Ramos	4/22
Ellen Tom	4/25
Craig Kokubun	4/26
Joey Gierlach	4/28
Gilbert Batangan	4/29
Richard Ching	4/30
Lily Ho	4/30

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## **Holy Week and Easter Schedule**

**Palm Sunday,** April 1, 9:00 am Palm Sunday Procession,  
Reading of the Passion according to Mark

**Maundy Thursday,** April 5, 6:30 pm, Footwashing,  
Stripping of the Altar

**Good Friday,** April 6, 12:00 noon Stations of the Cross  
6:00 pm Good Friday Liturgy

**Easter Day,** April 8 9:00 AM. Festival Holy Communion  
with Children's Handbell Choir.  
Potluck brunch and Easter Egg  
hunt following the service.