

*"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

## December 2011 **Advent 2011**

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*The Rev. David J. Gierlach, Rector*

Every time you take a seat in church, I wonder, if in the back of your mind, there is the question: "Is there a word from the Lord today?"

I think that question whispers itself, to the conscious or unconscious mind, to every person who takes the time to find that seat in church.

"Is there a word from the Lord today?"

It is the question on my mind each and every week as the struggle to hear what ought to be said consumes waking and sleeping hours.

And while sometimes the word comes as sunshine and laughter, at other times the word comes as a kind of terrifying hope.

Sometimes, the teaching is a hard one.

Like today's teaching, when the Word of the Lord seems to propel us from the ancient past right into today's headlines.

Did you hear the first line of the very first reading?

The lament cried out by the prophet Isaiah, a lament that echoes down through the ages:

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

I heard that lament ringing in my ears as I read the headline a few days ago about the super committee that wasn't so super after all.

That's the gang that was supposed to get our nation's finances in order.

They didn't.

Or the nonstop stories of how our political machinery has frozen solid at the national level.

Or how we are bogged down in a war now in its 10th year in a country even Genghis Khan gave up on.

We face reductions in military spending of 10% a year over the next decade and wrists are being slit over this outrage, even though we spend more on the military than the rest of the world combined.

And if that's not enough, let our gaze drift farther afield.

Egypt is on fire.

Somalia is ruled by armed thugs.

Iran threatens to destroy Israel, and Israel continues to poke sticks in the eyes of Palestinians with ever more aggressive settlements.

And so this first Sunday of Advent, the prophet so fittingly cries out in sorrowful lament:

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

A plea first cried as Isaiah's king set Israel on a course for disaster – it is a plea as pressing today as it was then.

Rather than being a time of Christmas carols and holiday cheer, Advent is, for us, a time of taking stock, of recollection, and of anticipation.

It's why you see your church and your clergy decked out in purple, after so many months of green or white.

Purple is a sign for royalty to be sure; but it is also a sign of bruises, bruises that come so naturally in a world where humanity pretends to be God.



# Rector's Message, continued

During Advent, we are invited to remember that left to our own devices, our goose is as cooked as yesterday's turkey, as Yogi Berra once said.

Where can we turn for help?

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

Such is the prayer of the church every Advent season, it is a longing for the often silent, seemingly absent God, to show his face, in ways that are unmistakable, bold and convincing.

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

It is a lament that also says much about how we understand God's relationship to us.

It is the common view that God is to be found somewhere "up there."

Many of us have a picture of that God, sitting on the sidelines of the world, peering over the rails on the 50-yard line, maybe a bag of popcorn in hand, watching what we're up to.

And yet, on this first Sunday of Advent, as we gather in the midst of so much strife, so much acrimony, so much fear, we Christians are coaxed to remember that the old way of thinking, of God "up there," has changed.

I'm reading Eli Wiesel's first book.

He calls it "Night."

It is the story of when Wiesel was a youngster, barely in his teens, when the Nazi's came to his small village in Transylvania and kidnapped every Jewish child, woman and man, and in railroad cars barely suited for cattle, delivered these human beings into the furnaces and slave lines of Auschwitz.

It is a book one can read only slowly, just a few pages at a time.

It was during holocaust that the Jewish people came face to face with where to look for God: was God "up there" or was God somewhere else?

Some answered that God was neither up there nor somewhere else.

The horror of holocaust was the end of faith for many.

For others, perhaps even Wiesel himself, God was found in the very midst of incomprehensible suffering.

Wiesel recounts the horrifying day that the Nazis hanged several young boys, boys who took a long time to die on the gallows.

An old man yelled out in the midst of this horror: "Where is God?!"

And Wiesel heard his heart answer: "God is there, hanging on the gallows."

Advent is the time we gather together to remember, to re-experience, that ours is a God who gets down in the muck with us.

We will hear it in the coming weeks.

"He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our back on him and looked the other way. He was despised and we did not care." (Isaiah chapter 53, verse 3.)

And we will hear this: it is the response to Isaiah's king who wanted God to provide an army to Israel.

Rather than an army, the prophet saw that:

"The Lord himself will give you a sign. The young woman will conceive a child and give birth to a son; she will name him Immanuel, God with us." (Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14.)

Rather than an army, God gives a child.

Rather than brute force, our God is with us in weakness.

For reasons we may perhaps someday come to understand, the Living God chooses not to enter our lives from a high and mighty place, but at the edges, in the midst of what is troubling, confusing, even confounding.

The Living God is a gentle God, not rescuing us from life's travails but walking with us through all that comes.

As folks line up in the early morning hours to get the best deal at BestBuy, we are called to look for a star, the sign of he who is coming.

As the powers and principalities invite us into the wilderness of fake cheer and blown budgets, we are invited to kneel quietly in prayer, that we might be filled with the peace of God.

As nations continue to rattle sabers and politicians worship at the altar of redemptive violence, we gather together to remember who we are, to commit ourselves yet again to become a people created by the suffering God who is nearer to you than your breath – this suffering God, who brings the dead to life!

Is there a word from the Lord today?

+amen

# Advent Heifer Project



During the four Sundays of Advent, loose change is collected by the Sunday School children during the offertory to benefit **Heifer International**, which seeks to “change the world two by two” and offer hope worldwide to families who are poor and hungry.

## Our Radical Mother

*My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,  
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior  
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.  
From this day all generations will call me blessed:  
the Almighty has done great things for me,  
and holy is his Name.*

*He has mercy on those who fear him  
in every generation.*

*He has shown the strength of his arm,  
he has scattered the proud in their conceit.*

*He has cast down the mighty from their thrones,  
and has lifted up the lowly.*

*He has filled the hungry with good things,  
and the rich he has sent away empty.*

*He has come to the help of his servant Israel  
for he remembered his promise of mercy,  
the promise he made to our fathers,  
to Abraham and his children forever.*

*(Luke 1:46-55)*



# BAZAAR

Saturday, Dec. 10  
9 am - 2 pm

### FOOD

Signature Fried Noodles  
Spam musubi  
and more!



### Entertainment

### White Elephants

### Country Store



### Plants



## A benefit for St. Elizabeth's Youth Outreach and Scholarship Programs

“Faith is the success of God’s quest for humanity, not the outcome of humanity’s search for God.”

W. Stringfellow, *Count It All Joy*, 47

If, in the last few years, you haven’t discarded a major opinion or acquired a new one, check your pulse. You may be dead.

Gellett Burgess



## Children’s Christmas Party

Neighborhood Children’s Christmas Party, **Thursday, Dec. 22nd, 10am to 2pm.**  
Mark your calendars now for this annual St. Elizabeth’s tradition. Please sign up on the sheet for refreshments. Santa will be here!



# Seen at St. Elizabeth's

All the photos on these two pages were taken by Father David Blanchett, retired Episcopal priest from the Diocese of Alaska, who joined us in worship recently.




Senior Warden Arleen Young



*If you haven't stopped by to worship with us lately, please do so during this Advent season. You will see that more and more we are a House of Prayer for All People.*

## A Note To Our Readers

To you many hundreds who receive this newsletter but aren't able to join us each Sunday, please consider a quarterly gift to the St. Elizabeth's Pastoral Fund. Our church is located in Honolulu's inner city. We have as our neighbors many immigrant families whose day-to-day life is just figuring out how to get by. Our Pastoral Fund is used almost exclusively to help folks pay a part of their rent and part of their electric bill. We have too many houseless friends and too many living without power. Your contribution can help. It's fully tax deductible. Thanks so much!



David+



The Gospel Procession



Beryl Goo reads the first lesson.





Everyone heads across the parking lot following the Sunday service for the blessing of the new HCAP facility in Shim Hall.

Those wonderful improvements allow us to provide real support to our neighbors, in the long history of St. Elizabeth's as a beacon to new immigrants.



The new computer lab serves our youth and will soon begin an Adult Class.

Interested in learning or teaching?

Call Fr. David!

## HCAP Facility Blessing





## Singing to the Glory of God



## News From the Garden

Our lovely community garden continues to produce wonderful fruits and vegetables, with a third crop of papaya getting large, more Manoa lettuce, sweet basil, Thai basil, fresh red strawberries and eggplant and even some cukes! If you haven't stuck your toe in some dirt in a while, stop on by, we have great dirt!

## Pray

"Pray inwardly even if you do not enjoy it. It does good, though you feel nothing. Yes, even though you think you are doing nothing."  
*- Julian of Norwich*

Let us endeavor so to live so that when we die even the undertaker will be sorry.  
*Mark Twain*



## Pledge Report

**Many thanks to all who have pledged for 2012!** We have received to date about 55 pledge cards with pledges totaling over \$85,000; and that's with over 20 long time pledgers who have not yet turned in their form. So far, our average annual pledge has **increased** from **\$1000 per pledge to \$1545 per pledge, a 50% increase per pledge!** If you plan to pledge and haven't yet, **please do so soon** so our budget and finance specialists can put pen to paper for next year. Again, THANK YOU!







## Happy Birthday

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

Jeffrey Starkman	12/1
Gillian Batangan	12/2
Cheryl Mitsuka	12/2
Rev. Peter Fan	12/3
Charles Steffey	12/4
ShellieAnne Steffey	12/4
Dexin Lu	12/6
Christopher Lau	12/10
Jonathan Lau	12/18
Carla Pacupac	12/19
Kaylen Hayashi	12/20
Susan Won	12/22
Gelacio Timonio	12/23
Delphine Shea	12/23
Christine Ling	12/24
Laureen Zane	12/28
Rally Muludy	12/29
Aaron Arakawa	12/30
Ieichy Mako	12/30
Mildred Goo	12/31
Otega White	12/31
Saimone Neset Jr.	12/31

## New Parish Directory

We are working on publishing a new Member Directory. Please see Tom Ishida either before or after the service to have your picture taken. Also if your address or phone number has changed since the last directory, please give us the updated information on the clipboard.



## Chuukese Bibles

Last year St. Elizabeth's asked the **Church Periodical Club** for a grant so we could purchase Bibles in the Chuukese language. When so much time passed and nothing was heard, we assumed the answer was "No." Much to our surprise, just a couple of weeks ago, a check arrived for \$850 to allow us to purchase 50 Bibles. Thank you, CPC!

## Attendance



11/2	Wed. Healing Eucharist	34
11/2	Ilokano Service	20
11/6	All Saints 8:15 Eucharist	138
11/6	Ilokano Service	65
11/9	Wed. Healing Eucharist	31
11/13	Sunday 8:15 am Eucharist	116
11/13	Chinese Eucharist	5
11/16	Wed. Healing Eucharist	33
11/20	Sunday 8:15 am Eucharist	163
11/20	Chinese Eucharist	4
11/23	Wed. Healing Eucharist	35
11/24	Thanksgiving	65
11/27	Sunday 8:15 am Eucharist	171
11/27	Chinese Eucharist	5
11/30	Wed. Healing Eucharist	37



Photos by Father David Blanchett.

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*A House of Prayer for all People*

Return service requested

## Christmas Services

### Christmas Eve

Dec. 24th, 9:30 pm.  
"An International Christmas"  
Special Christmas music

Dec. 24th, 10:00 pm,  
Festival Holy Eucharist

### Christmas Day

Dec. 25th, 9:00 am Festival Holy Eucharist



Our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time. What we really want is for things to remain the same but get better.

- Sydney J Harris

## Poinsettia Donations Needed



Donations will be gladly accepted for purchasing poinsettias to decorate the church for Christmas –in memory or in honor of a loved one.  
**Deadline is December 18, 2011**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of poinsettias @ \$8.50 each \_\_\_\_\_

In memory / honor of (*please circle*) \_\_\_\_\_

"The love demonstrated by St. Paul and Jesus and Gandhi and Martin Luther King was a tough, firm, outspoken honesty that demanded the best from people, a love more accurately described by the Quaker injunction, 'speak truth to power,' than by the passive acquiescence of 'never make anyone unhappy.'"

Dorothy Samuel, *The Violence in Ourselves*, 241.