

*"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

**July 2011**

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 Saimone Lino,  
Diocesan Missioner

The Reverend Dr.  
Gerald G. Gifford.  
Rector Emeritus

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,  
Cantonese Language Priest

Hsiao Ying "Ajaon" Chen  
Choir Director

Marie Wang  
Organist

Katherine Crosier  
Parish Administrator  
Editor and Layout  
Music Consultant

Arleen Young  
Senior Warden

Preston Lentz  
Junior Warden

Stuart Ching  
Secretary / Clerk

Heather Manning, Treasurer

Website:  
[www.stelizabeth720.org](http://www.stelizabeth720.org)

Email:  
[stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com](mailto:stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com)

## Listen!

*The Reverend David J. Gierlach*

When I was in the seminary, we practiced giving sermons. During one I said that the parables of Jesus were sweet, simple stories intended to convey an obvious message.

My professor fell off his chair and gave me an "F".

Little did I know at the time what parables really are, when put to use by Jesus.

Only after actually studying the parables, sitting with the parables, surrendering to the parables, did I learn:

They are hand grenades.

They are bazookas.

They exist in order to upset you and me, and the millions of you and me's down through the ages of the faithful.

In parables, Jesus removes our heads from our necks, shakes them out, and then begins to teach us what reality really is.

We will hear many parables this year, as we walk with Matthew from now til Advent.

Today's is the first.

It is, in a sense, the cornerstone of all the parables to follow.

It is the first parable told in Matthew's Gospel.

And it's not what it seems.

Plenty of us will hear this parable and think it's all about us.

Am I good soil or weeds? Hard pan or thorns?

Of course we know what WE are. We're here in church.

Of course, it goes without saying, WE are the fertile soil.

End of story. Next sermon please!

But this parable has a lot less to say about you and me than it says about God.

What kind of God is this who takes precious seed and tosses it everywhere?

A wasteful God, that's who!

An irresponsible God, that's who!

This kind of God probably doesn't even have a strategic plan or a set of targeted demographics or even a marketing strategy!

What Jesus does in this parable is to remind us NOT of something new about God, but about something very old indeed.

It's we who keep trying to bring God down to size, to make God angry and judgmental and fierce (maybe so God will look more like us).

Yet, hundreds of years before Jesus, God, through the prophet Isaiah announced:

"Listen! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy?"

... For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and don't return until they've watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so will the words that come out of my mouth not come back empty handed. They'll do the work I sent them to do, they'll complete the task I set for them. And you will go out in joy, and be led back in peace... "Isaiah 55:1-2, 10-13

This extravagant God is God.

This is the God Jesus proclaims; this is the God who even now, in the most natural and most bizarre ways too, is breaking into the world.

Father Bob Capon says the parable of the sower teaches us that the Kingdom is catholic, it is mysterious, and it is already present among us; and not only present, but aggressively insisting on a response. Capon, Kingdom, Grace, Judgment, 56 (paraphrase).



# Rector's Message, cont.

"Catholic" meaning universal, because the Word that is sown by the Father is Jesus, and Jesus is already sown all over the world!

Missionaries who travel to distant lands, when they get it right, don't go to bring Jesus, but to discover the Jesus who is already there.

The kingdom is "mysterious," because, like a seed, it seems to disappear as soon as it goes to work.

Kalfred Yee taught me that in one respect, Jesus has it wrong.

Jesus has it wrong when he says the mustard seed is the smallest seed.

Not so, Mr. Yee confirms, because the orchid seed, that's the smallest.

But whether it's a tiny mustard seed or a tinier still orchid seed, what is astonishing is the beautiful plant that comes from a seed that is practically invisible.

That's what the kingdom of God is like.

The kingdom of God is like a small child.

The kingdom of God is like a great banquet, whose host welcomes in the lost, the disabled, the outcasts.

Like Jesus on the cross, buried in the ground, resurrected and seen for a while, then seemingly --- gone again.

That's what the kingdom of God is like, Jesus says.

It is catholic, it is mysterious, and it is here, now, breaking in on us today, in ways we can see but only if we first take off our heads, shake them out, and look with the eyes, hear with the ears, that Jesus gives us.

Paul got that message.

His letter today is a frontal attack on our constant worries that we need to prove ourselves to God to be saved, that only some are saved, that God is the giant bookkeeper in the sky, just waiting to knock us down.

"There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death." Rom. 8:11.

No condemnation.

None at all.

Right now.

And yesterday; and tomorrow.

Why?

Because God loves us.

Paul gets the ridiculous, wonderful, too good to be true truth that Jesus came not to suffer in our place, or to show us how to earn God's love.

Jesus came, not because God had some kind of blood lust that needs satisfying.

No.

Jesus, in his utter faithfulness in this extravagant Father, remains faithful even to death, death on a cross, to show you, to show me, how much God already loves us.

His resurrection shows you and I that God's love is stronger than even the strongest enemy: death.

And if God's love is stronger than death, it is certainly stronger than our insecurities, our guilt's, our fears of not measuring up.

And with that, we can exhale.

Following the Way of Jesus is to see reality with new eyes.

For us modern folk, even science itself helps in this effort.

Despite the silly debates of science versus religion, God uses science to help us peer deeply into the mysteries of what we think we know.

You've perhaps read that physicists now believe that the smallest element in creation is something called a string.

Like a piano string, a violin string, only infinitely smaller.

So small that if an atom was the size of the universe, a string would be the size of one of our Cyprus trees outside.

Yet these strings, and the notes they create, may be the building blocks of all that exists, including you and I.

In other words, "deep in our core, we're all essentially made of music." Michael Finkle, Men's Journal, 104.

How's that feel?

Which takes us back to the very beginning of today's gospel:

"Listen!"

We live in times that cajole us into focusing on our day-to-day needs and our day to day wants.

A full stomach, paid bills and some entertainment and you know how happy that makes many of us most of the time.

And yet in our heart of hearts, we know that's not enough.

That kind of life turns us into Esau, who sells his birthright for a bowl of Zippy's chili.

Brother Jacob kept his eye on the bigger picture.

Jesus implores us to do the same.

"Listen!" Jesus shouts, and if we do, we might catch a glimpse of the kingdom of heaven peering out from behind that tree over there, leaning around the corner of that house, pushing up through the fertile ground across the parking lot.

The kingdom: singing the music of the God who calls us home.

The kingdom: singing the music of who we are at the very core of our being.

Listen!

+amen

## Our Garden Groweth!



## The Gospel in a new way

“Is it possible, I wonder, to say that it is only when you hear the Gospel as a wild and marvelous joke that you really hear it at all? Heard as anything else, the Gospel is the church’s thing, the preacher’s thing, the lecturer’s thing. Heard as a joke—high and unbidden and ringing with laughter—it can only be God’s thing.” *Buechner, Telling the Truth, 68.*



And God said, “It is good, it is all very good!” (A perfect rainbow).

*“The shadows fall. The stars appear. The birds begin to sleep. Night embraces the silent half of the earth. A vagrant, a destitute wanderer with dusty feet, finds his way down a new road. A homeless God, lost in the night, without papers, without identification, without even a number, a frail expendable exile lies down in desolation under the sweet stars of the world and entrusts himself to sleep.”*

*Merton, The Book of Hours, 200.*

## A Nighttime Prayer

“Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love’s sake.” *BCP 134.*



## Food Pantry Volunteers



Every Friday morning, volunteers assemble food bags for congregational members in need.

# Pentecost at St. Elizabeth's



Balloons are inflated in the conference room to be used for decorating the church on Pentecost.



The Kealoha family is ready to march in the Pentecost procession.



## Bulletin Blooper

Don't let worry kill you -- let the church help.



The line for Spaghetti got longer and longer!

## Monthly Spaghetti Dinner Fun

All are welcome to attend the Spaghetti Dinner on the Last Friday of the Month, 6-8 pm. Next one is **Friday, July 29.**

After dinner, how about a round of mah-jongg?



Sunday School children sing on Pentecost.

## Quilting Bee??

Laura Iwami would love to start a quilting bee. Interested?? Please tug at Laura's arm.



Gambling? Who said anything about gambling?

This afternoon there will be a meeting in the South and North ends of the church. Children will be baptized at both ends.



Thursday night—Potluck supper. Prayer and medication to follow.

## Youth Events

Coach Amber is whipping into shape a whole host of basketball players. Practice is Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday from 2-4 p.m. Parents report children who have never slept better! Still needed: water boys and girls.



Warmups before basketball practice.



Member **Doug Ing** was selected to show his artwork at the Artists of Hawaii 2011 Exhibition at the Honolulu Academy of Arts, from June 30 to September 25th.

Check it out!



## Attendance

6/5	Sunday 8:15	121
6/5	Ilokano Service	55
6/8	Wed. Healing Eucharist	35
6/8	Wed. Ilokano Service	31
6/12	Sunday 8:15 am (Pentecost)	161
6/12	Chinese Service	6
6/15	Wed. Healing Eucharist	30
6/19	Sunday 8:15 am (Trinity)	160
6/19	Chinese Service	6
6/23	Wed. Healing Eucharist	21
6/26	Sunday 8:15 am	159
6/26	Chinese Service	4



Coach Amber and her young basketball students.

# Honolulu Handbell Ensemble Concert



Our own **Marie Wang** is a member of the Honolulu Handbell Ensemble, an accomplished group which held a concert at St. Elizabeth's on June 11th.



The Honolulu Handbell Ensemble is directed by Anne Craig Lum.

“One of the deepest and strangest of all human moods is the mood which will suddenly strike us perhaps in a garden at night, or deep in sloping meadows – the feeling that every flower and leaf has just uttered something stupendously direct and important.”

*G.K. Chesterton.*

## Welcome, Newest Members!

For the second year in a row, St. E's welcomed many new Episcopalians into the diocese at the Pentecost baptism/confirmation/reception service presided over by our Bishop. We welcome into our church **Viliani Langi, Anapesi Langi, Kaoneti Lauaki, Joneti Lauaki, Joshua Lauaki, Fiula Fonokalafi, Sioni Fonokalai, Lisa Fele`unga, Denis `Akau`ola, Ninsa Esefan** and **Singeichy Singeuvu.**

So happy to have you with us!!

## Legacy Society

of the Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii

The Legacy Society of our Church includes all members who have provided for the church in their will or trust after their death. This summer, the Oahu Legacy members will dine at Mandalay Restaurant, 1055 Alakea Street, Honolulu at noon on Saturday, August 13, 2011. If you are a Legacy member, please plan to attend and RSVP at 261-5126 by July 30.

If you are not a member, please become one by including the church in your will or trust so that we may continue to preach the good news of Jesus Christ for many more years to come.

## Church Humor

A preacher's sermon went on endlessly. One man got up and walked out of the church. He came back near the end of the service.

The pastor greeted him on his way out. “Clarence,” the pastor said, “I noticed you left during my sermon and then later came back. Are you feeling okay?”

“Sure,” Clarence said, “I'm okay. I just went out to get a haircut.”

“Why didn't you do that before you came to church?” the pastor asked.

“I didn't need it then,” Clarence replied.

—via Mildred Katzell, Medford, NJ



## School Supply List - items needed Bring to St. Elizabeth's Church

- 3-ring binders
- Box of 24 crayons
- Erasers
- Folder paper - 100 pack
- Glue stick
- White glue, 4 oz.
- Index dividers (for 3 ring binder)
- Markers, fine point, dry erase, dark color
- Pencils, #2
- Pencils, colored (set)
- Pencils, correcting (red)
- Pens, felt (broad tip)
- Permanent Marker, black (fine)
- Portfolio, soft, 2 pocket, 3 prongs
- Portfolios, (soft) 2 pockets
- Ruler, 12-inch
- School box
- Scissors (6 inch)
- Tablets, composition with lines



**Happy Birthday**  
*God's blessings on those with  
July birthdays!*

Richard Roke	7/3
Ronald Roke	7/3
Faith Chock	7/4
Alan Esaki	7/10
Richard Okubo	7/11
Carly Venenciano	7/12
Ruby Chock	7/12
Hermenegilda Sarceda	7/12
Jeldan Romualdo	7/13
Kody Hayashi	7/15
Gertrude Tyau	7/15
Onlyone Helly	7/16
Mildred Kuniyoshi	7/17
Nathan Neeto	7/18
Lisa-Anne Chan	7/19
Tim Blaisdell	7/20
Frank Yap	7/20
Lynnsey Ho	7/21
Richard Yee	7/23
Barry Zane	7/24
Mary Ann Lentz	7/25
Jerek Jong	7/26
Jean Hirashiki	7/27
Lydia Joseph	7/27
Jordan Rico	7/30

## Come Join Us!

Please join us for STIMULATING, INVIGORATING, CHALLENGING and lively BIBLE STUDY every Wednesday morning following the 9:30 healing service. If you love pathos and suspense, murder and mayhem, love stories and romance, this is the place for you! You will see a side of God you never dreamed of. Seating is limited. First come first serve! Make your reservation TODAY!!"



**Bluegrass Finale**

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church  
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## God's Kids Say the Funniest Things

The pastor's five-year-old boy had been so badly behaved during the week that she told him his punishment would be that he couldn't go to the Sunday school picnic that Sunday.

When Sunday came, the pastor felt she had been too harsh and told her son that he could go to the picnic. The boy looked even sadder.

"What's the matter? I thought you'd be happy to go to the picnic," his mother said.

"It's too late," the boy replied.

"I've already prayed for rain."

—via Peter Dring, Land O Lakes, WI

In a church bulletin: "Next Friday we will be serving hot gods for lunch. If you would like to make a donation, fill out a form, enclose a check, and drip in the collection basket."

—Rev. Harry Mahoney, Dedham, MA