

"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 2012

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Unilateral Disarmament

The Rev. David J. Gierlach, Rector

If you stopped people on the street and asked them to name one story from the Old Testament, I'd lay odds that the story of Noah would top the list.

We learn about Noah in Sunday school, and he pops up in places like Bill Cosby's comedy routines and on greeting cards and even on the History channel every other week as they follow one fundamentalist group after another looking for the ark on that mountaintop in Turkey.

The popular story goes like this: God gets mad at humanity and wipes everyone out except for Noah and his family in a gigantic flood.

The story of Noah is one reason many folks think of the God of the Old Testament as the God of anger, of fear and violence, while the God of the New Testament is considered the God of love.

But the popular view of God, as described in the story of Noah, is not what is actually in the Bible.

Just before today's reading, we learn what causes God to bring back the waters of chaos and to remake his creation:

"The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth ... And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart." Genesis, Chapter 6: 5-6.

It isn't anger, not even revenge.

It is grief and a broken heart that leads God to the decision to start anew.

Of course when the flood subsides, it doesn't take five minutes before our ancestors start right up where they left off.

Noah curses one of his grandchildren and before long, a repopulated planet decides to build a tower reaching into the heavens; they call it the tower of Babel: showing God just who's in charge.

You would think that God might order another round of cleaning up; another great flood, but you would be wrong.

Instead, right here in Genesis, the very first book of the Old Testament, what we have is a God who, in the face of intransigent human obstinacy, stubborn human willfulness and an intractable habit of going our own way; we have a God who does the unthinkable: God unilaterally disarms!

His new deal with Noah (called a covenant) and with all of us down through the ages; a deal that includes even the cows and trees and birds, God's new deal is this: "I love you."

God promises: "Never again will I wipe out what I have invented (that's you and me and the cows and trees and birds) even though what I have invented very often breaks my heart."

"As a reminder of my pledge, look to the sky."



Rector's Message, continued

You see, the rainbow is God's war bow.

When warriors in days of old wish to show that the war is over, they remove the bowstring from their bow as a sign of peace.

The unstrung bow cannot cause harm.

And God says:

"As a reminder to me and to you, my Technicolor bow is now and will be forever unstrung; it is now, and forever will be, pointed toward the sky, away from you, away from the earth."

Such is God's new deal with humanity.

It is, with Noah, and every generation following Noah, a wholly one-sided deal; with God doing all the giving; since what God has come to see is that if we won't change then God must.

What is happening is that God's need for justice runs headlong into God's desire for mercy, and while God has every right to wad up and throw away the inventions he's made (that's us and the cows and the trees and the birds), and start all over again, God decides instead to throw his lot in with us.

That's why the Deist god, so popular in our country, the god who sets it all in motion and then leaves us to our own devices; that's why that god is a false god: a faint shadow of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob: the true God who, from the very beginning, throws his lot in with us.

It's why the gods of Iran or Russia or the United States, wrapped in national flags, blessing national adventures, the gods most folks seem to worship, are false gods; only impotent idols; because the true God loves all of humanity, loves all of creation.

God, it seems, from the very beginning, is a vulnerable God.

And what a wonderful place to begin our Lenten journey, since for so many, Lent brings to mind a vengeful God, a bookkeeper God, a God who takes note of every sin, every foible, a god who blesses "us against them."

It is not so.

And today's Gospel lesson brings that home to roost.

"In those days, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee..."

Nazareth is a fourth rate town from a third rate region of Israel.

As Jesus' own apostle Nathanael cracks: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"

So it is.

The Messiah isn't from New York or LA or Rome or Athens, but Nazareth.

And thus begins the ministry of the Messiah of God; a ministry that will see him embracing lepers, healing bleeding women, giving sight to the blind and food for the hungry; raising the dead.

God comes into our history as one of us; bleeds with us; dies for us, redeems us.

"Now hold on a minute," you say.

"Things don't look any different now than they did before the flood or after the flood or before the birth of Jesus or after his resurrection."

"Humanity continues to create divisions among itself," you observe.

"The resources of the good earth are often stripped NOT to meet human need but to satisfy human greed," you say.

"Wars and rumors of war abound," you holler!

What really has changed?

How are we to look for God's presence in the world?

What does the kingdom of God look like?

Perhaps it looks like this.

A rich man, call him Warren Buffett, invites his rich pals over for an evening of culture.

Mr. Buffett has planned a mahvelous dinner to be followed by two plays: one a tragedy, the other a comedy.

The pompous composer of the tragedy is outraged, outraged I say (!), that his masterpiece will be followed by a frivolous comedy.

That outrage becomes disbelief when Mr. Buffet, (realizing he needs to save some time for the fireworks show), says this:

"I have decided that both the tragedy and the comedy shall be performed at the

Rector's Message

same time, on the same stage!"

The composer at this point, as Mike Myers used to say on Saturday Night Live: is verklempt.

(If you're too young, or too old, to remember Mike Myers, think: purple-faced rage).

The composer is beside himself that actors from the comedy will infiltrate his masterpiece, but Mr. Buffet insists: the tragedy will be invaded by characters from the comedy.

Luckily, the principal actress of the comedians is a master of improvisation.

As one theater critic wryly observes,

"Since she always plays herself, you see, she is always at home in scenes of every kind." Cavanaugh, *Migrations Of The Holy*, 64.

(I feel that way about Tom Cruise, but that's another sermon).

As the curtain rises, we find the tragic actress grieving over the death of her lover, because all tragedies end in death, and this is no exception.

Holding sword to her breast, she prepares to kill herself, so that she might have the peace of death: no more suffering, no more corruption, no more sorrow. Id.

Suddenly, the comedians invade.

"Why suicide?" they ask.

"It's not death you need, my dear, you need a new lover!"

Enter stage left the handsome new lover, who woos her and wins her, and carries her off, so that the once tragic actress now embraces life instead of death; she embraces a new beginning rather than the end. Id.

Do you get it?

God's invasion of our world, beginning with his deal with Noah, and continuing through the life, death and resurrection of our Lord, doesn't end the tragedy that we human beings seem so intent on creating for one another; but rather, God enters into it, and in the entering, transforms it: with God becoming the comedian in the midst of our tragedy: transforming fate into destiny, reworking death into life.

God's encounter with our lives is like a master pianist who finds a child poking at a piano's keyboard.

The master pianist sits down next to the child and begins playing over and around the child, transforming the child's

discordant notes into beautiful music.

In other words, God enters our lives, and the life of our community and the life of our nations, in ways sometimes apparent, yet often unseen, and reshapes our tragedies into the comedy that is the Kingdom of God.

"The kingdom of God is a comedy," you ask?

What else can it be when Jesus praises God for letting the simple in on God's great secret, while hiding it from those we call wise; when Paul glories in weakness and exults in being a fool for Christ; when Peter finally sees that God turns the world's wisdom on it's ear; they are all applauding the comedy of God penetrating our tragedy, and in that penetration, transforming all that is.

Leaving us to wonder about the rainbow: God's Technicolor bow, forever reminding us that, no matter the rains that come, God never leaves us alone.

+amen

THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil and Jeff Keane



"I can't find what channel we're on."

from JoyfulNoiseletter.com
Reprinted with permission of Bil Keane



Shrove Tuesday, Feb. 21st, was a great hit with over 60 people in attendance eating up **Uncle Lowell Ing's** delicious French Toast (with son **Doug** giving an able assist) and devouring Aunt **Lani Kealoha's** red sausage together with a couple (million) pancakes! Thanks to **Sue Yap** and to everyone who made the night a special one.



Doug Ing helps in the kitchen.



“Are you not a robber, you who consider your own that which has been given you solely to distribute to others? This bread which you have set aside is the bread of the hungry; this garment you have locked away is the clothing of the naked; those shoes you let rot are the shoes of him who is barefoot; those riches you have hoarded are the riches of the poor.”

–Basil of Caesarea, 4th c.



New Lenten Banners



Our new Lenten banners are courtesy of **Doug Ing** and his India connections.

Thanks Doug!

It's Lent



The Lenten service begins with children reading a prayer and extinguishing one candle each week from the Lenten Wreath.

Beginning on the First Sunday of Lent and continuing to Easter, the worship **begins at 9:00 am** rather than 8:15 am. At 8:15, Father David leads an Adult Study. The first Sunday he discussed The Book of Common Prayer: "What's in it for you?" The Second Sunday was: "Reading the Bible and what you should know before you do." The Third Sunday of Lent, Stuart Ching will present "Space in Church Worship: The Relationship between Sacred and Profane."

Attendance

2/1	Wed. Healing Eucharist	28
2/1	Ilokano Service	19
2/5	Sunday 8:15 Eucharist	133
2/5	Ilokano Service	25
2/8	Wed. Healing Eucharist	30
2/12	Sunday 8:15 am Eucharist	142
2/12	Chinese Eucharist	4
2/19	Sunday 8:15 am Eucharist	146
2/19	Chinese Eucharist	4
2/21	Shrove Tuesday Evening Prayer	42
2/22	Ash Wednesday —noon	37
2/22	Ash Wednesday —6 pm	36
2/26	Sunday 9:00 am Eucharist	145
2/26	Chinese Eucharist	4

"Many people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I do understand."
—Mark Twain

Congratulations, Lani & Jimmy!



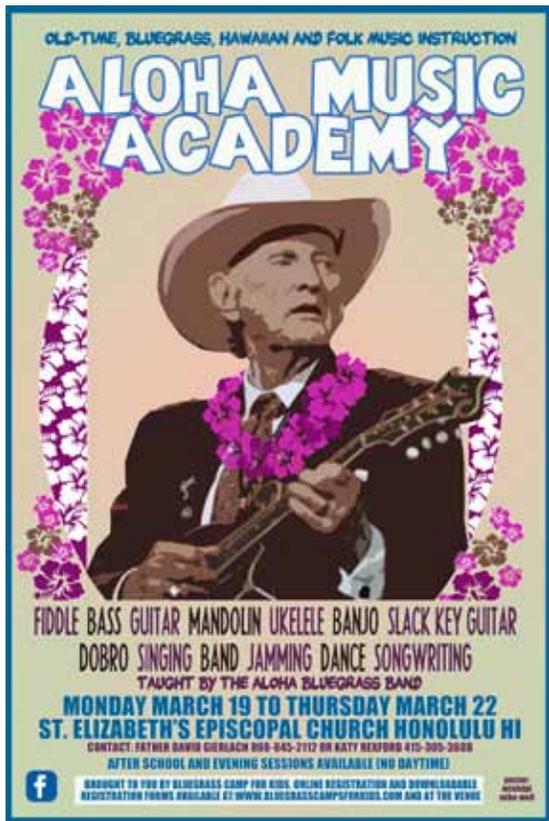
Father David leads the Adult Study in Shim Hall before the service.



Lani and Jimmy Kealoha celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary on Sunday, February 19th.

Bluegrass and Hawaiian Music Camp

March 19-22, 2012



Once again, St. Elizabeth's is sponsoring the Bluegrass Music Festival which brings together young musicians from the mainland who teach guitar, banjo, mandolin, bass, ukulele and other instruments. From **Monday, March 19 through Thursday, March 22**, kids and adults will be able to receive instruction on bluegrass and slack-key guitar, fiddle, banjo, mandolin, ukulele, upright bass, singing, songwriting, and – for the first time – resophonic guitar, or dobro! The slide style of playing the dobro will showcase a special connection between bluegrass and Hawaiian music.

There will be two (2) different sessions per day: an after-school session from 3:00-6:00pm for kids ages 6-16, and an evening session from 7:00-9:00pm, for ages 12-120. Instruments will be available to all who want to learn.

The tuition for this remarkable class is only \$125 per person for the entire week!

The Aloha Music Academy is led by The Aloha Bluegrass Band: Danny Booth (bass, mandolin, guitar), Katy Rexford (fiddle), and Rion Schmidt (banjo, guitar), and new members K.C. Groves (mandolin, bass, guitar) and Dave Richey (dobro, guitar). Members of the Aloha Bluegrass Band have performed nationally and internationally with musicians including Michelle Shocked, Peter Rowan, Laurie Lewis, Uncle Earl, Hit & Run Bluegrass, Frank Solivan and Dirty Kitchen, Bearfoot, Spring Creek, and more.

Applications are available at http://www.bluegrasscampsforkids.com/camp_signup.php?camp_id=17 or see Father David.

The Intern's Corner

James Fitzpatrick

Over the last couple of weeks several things have gone up around St. E's. The first things were three lights fixed to the top of Shim Hall. When night functions happen at St. E's, there is very little light in the parking lot. Two of these lights are on a timer, set to light up the parking lot between 7 and 11pm. The third light located above the kitchen door. This light will turn on when the light kitchen lights are on. All three of the lights have UV sensors on top of them, so they will only be illuminated when the sun goes down.

The other big project that we have been working on is building new basketball hoops. The reason we needed to build new basketball hoops was because the children set the old ones to a low height so that they could dunk on them. The constant dunking and hanging on the rim had begun pulling the bolts out of the metal pole holding the structure up. The new basketball hoops have a base with four industrial wheels for easier movement and are fixed at a height of ten feet. At that height I won't be upset if any of the boys can dunk on it.

Besides these projects, a small group of parishioners have been helping me to organize the youth outreach ministry. Fane Lino, Seini Lino, Viliami Lino, and Sarah Kleinshmidt have been meeting with me regularly to decide how best to promote after school programs and the basketball program, as well as cultivate new ideas.

If anyone would like volunteer their time to help me with the Youth Outreach Program or any future projects please contact me by email at JDF111888@msn.com, or stop by the Church between 11am and 4:30pm during the week.



Sunday School News

With the start of Lent fast approaching, we gathered on Shrove Tuesday for fun and merriment and pancakes, pancakes, and pancakes... with French toast, red hot hot dogs, lots of syrup, fruits and salad and desserts! Sunday School students TN and Kevin helped to set the placemats on the tables, Kevin served plates of pancakes and French toast to our parishoners! Doug Ing has already shared his 'secret' ingredient he will use in the French toast next Shrove Tuesday! Kama's tutu, Lani and James Kealoha donated the hot dogs for all to enjoy! Tea and Joey's dad, Fr. David, flipped the pancakes after the evening service in the church! And everyone learned how to make a cross folding a piece of paper and one cut of the scissors!!!

Throughout Lent, the Sunday School children will process in and participate in the call-to-worship readings around a Lenten wreath. There are 6 purple candles and the white Christ candle, all lit on the first Sunday in Lent. As the weeks countdown to Easter, a candle is snuffed out until on Easter Sunday only the Christ candle is lit at the start of the service! The series of Lenten calls-to-worship is produced by special arrangement with the Contemporary Drama Service by Paul Dyck.

The children have been learning to play the handbells, how to



Seini Lino leads handbell practice.

ring, how to count the beats, how to listen! Auditions have been held, the children in the first group to debut on Easter Sunday will be students Naomi, Joshua Lino, Brenson, Kenji, Joey, Tea, and Kama! Congratulations to these students who now have added practice scheduled on Sundays at 8:45 am! Children will be added to the handbell choir as they learn the techniques of bell ringing.

Also during Lent, the last 2 weeks in March, Fr. David will teach a First Communion class for children 7 years old and up. There is a list of students who would make excellent candidates for this class and we will be sending out letters of recommendation for them soon. Upon completion of the class, these students will receive First Communion on Easter Sunday. The class will meet at 8:15 am in the church conference room. The class is open to all, if you have a child interested, sign up on the sign up sheet, or with any of the Sunday School teachers.

A very blessed and prayerful Lenten season to all.

Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with March birthdays!

Colin Wong	3/1
Kifenin Dopich	3/1
Obeyi Helly	3/3
Damien Ballesteros	3/4
Roy Chee	3/5
Doreen Ching	3/7
Marites Unarce	3/7
Aadriana White	3/9
Arleen Young	3/12
Istina Eichy	3/13
Annalei Badua	3/13
Sarah Bush	3/14
Ruthann Sorcey	3/16
Haku Blaisdell	3/17
Miranda Young	3/17
Ensen Repaky	3/22
Anaseini Lino	3/28
Gerald Lau	3/29

Vestry Notes

The Vestry will have an overnight retreat at St. Anthony's Retreat Center in Kalihi Valley, March 23-24. Please keep the Vestry in your prayers as it meets and prays and talks and listens about where the Holy Spirit is leading our ministry and our lives. Because of this retreat, our RESEALING OF THE PARKING LOT will be postponed 'til after Easter . . .

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A House of Prayer for all People

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*“A faith that gives nothing,
costs nothing, and suffers nothing,
is worth nothing.”*

–Martin Luther



“The cross is the eternal expression of the lengths to which God will go in order to restore broken community. The resurrection is the symbol of God's triumph over the forces that seek to block community. The Holy Spirit is the continuing community-creating reality that moves through history. He who works against community is working against the whole of creation.”

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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. Potluck brunch following.



Easter Lilies

Donations will be gladly accepted for purchasing Easter lilies for decorating the church. You may purchase a plant in memory or in honor of a loved one.

Deadline: April 1.

Name _____

Number of lilies @ \$8.50 each _____

In memory / honor of: _____
