

"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 2018

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Poetry or Prose?

The Rev. David J. Gierlach

Today is the first Sunday of the Advent Season.
Hence the purple.

Purple for the royalty of Christ.

Purple for the wounds our Christ endures as he seeks to teach us what it is to be truly human, beings.

And throughout Advent we have these strange readings that are all about not only endings, but THE end of life as we know it.

Strange readings because — isn't Advent all about getting ready for a beginning?

That beginning being the birth of the baby in the manger?

And the answer is yes — and no.

Advent does lead us into Christmas morning, but Advent is not primarily about that.

Advent is primarily about helping us cope with — and helping us realize — that we live in in-between times.

We live between the time of Our Lord's birth and his final coming.

So with in-between eyes, let's sit with today's gospel for a moment.

This strange gospel warns us of roaring seas and frightening signs in the sun, moon and stars, the very shaking of the heavens!

How shall we hear such warnings?

Are they simply old fashioned ramblings that 2000 years of come and gone history shows to be merely that, just ramblings?

Many people today are convinced that life exists only between the moment we exit the womb until the moment we take our last breath, that we come from nothing — and to nothing shall we return.

So any talk of a returning Jesus is pure nonsense. Others seize on these gospel words with complete literalism.

They give us charts and graphs that calculate the exact day and time such things will happen.

These are the premillennialists and postmillennialists who are counting down to the rapture.

There are those who support Israel not out of love for or admiration of our Jewish mothers and fathers, our elders in the faith; but rather because they believe Christ's return can be forced upon God, once an all out war begins in the Middle East.

But perhaps the way Jesus intends us to understand these words is not as ramblings nor as fortune cookie predictions of the future, but to read this, and all of our Advent lessons, through the eyes of poetry.

It was Billy Collins, the poet laureate of the United States over 20 years ago, who pleaded with us to approach poetry as "a beehive to listen to, as water to ski across, as a dark room in which to feel around for a light switch."

He made that plea after discovering that too many folks simply want to dissect and analyze poetry, to "tie the poem to a chair with a rope, and torture a confession out of it." Id.

If we hear again today's gospel not as ramblings, but as poetry, perhaps we shall hear something of the undeniable terrors of life — terrors that, in the end, no one avoids.

Perhaps the terror that comes to your life is that diagnosis of cancer or dementia, of a stroke or a heart attack.

Perhaps that terror is the loss of a beloved spouse, or a beloved child.

The terrors in life that are pregnant in the poetry of Jesus may be a collapsed economy, like the one that is currently destroying Venezuela; a collapse that our own nation barely escaped a



decade ago — one we may face yet again in the months or years to come.

These terrors may be war, as the suffering children of Yemen die by the thousands from starvation, as Syria seeks to rebuild from little more than rubble.

If we hear Jesus' words as poetry rather than prediction — perhaps we can slowly come to see that Jesus is preparing us to face whatever terrors may come our way — and to face them with the confidence of faith that in God “all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.”

How can we do this?

It begins with preparation.

Which is why we are here today — which is why we show up each and every week — to prepare — yes, as individuals, but even more so as a community, for whatever terrors may come our way.

We hear the word, we sing songs, we recite the deep truths of our faith, we confess our sins, and we take in — through the bread and wine — the body and blood of the one who assures us that all shall be well.

But these steps, our participation in the rituals of our faith, as important as they are, are not the end; they are in fact only the beginning of our preparation.

As we continue our spiritual journey, what we come to see is that the key to spiritual maturity is something we normally flee from: that key is surrender.

But surrender is not about rolling over.

It's not about capitulation.

“It has to do with relaxing into a sort of ‘inner alignment’ that allows you to stay in the flow of the deep wisdom that is always and forever moving through you.

Surrender is a place of openness, an openness that frees you to face with serenity anything that life throws your way.

According to the 17th century mystic John Boehme:

‘Here, now, is the right place for you to wrestle before the divine face. If you remain firm, if you do not bend, you shall see and perceive amazing wonders. You will discover how Christ will invade the hell in you and will subdue your beasts.’” C. Bourgeault, *The Wisdom Jesus*, 174, paraphrased.

Surrender connects us to Christ - heart to heart — mind to mind — gut to gut.

What surrender helps us begin to glimpse is the very thing life's terrors keep us blind to — yet it is the truest thing in all of creation.

It is the glory of God.

“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.

To God be the glory forever, the One who ‘raises the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.’ (Rom. 11:33-36; 4:17).

That glory doesn't wait for tomorrow!

We catch glimpses of God's glory, we see for a moment the fruit of our faith, every Saturday morning at breakfast in the hall.

This marvelous ministry that the Lino family gave birth to and that the loving hands of so many continues — sees on a weekly basis not only the hungry fed — but this rainbow of God's people, Anglicans, Mormons, Romans, Pentecostals and Unitarians and Baptists and Jews, coming together as one, and we are all graced with a peek inside the banquet hall of God.

We catch a glimpse of God's glory in the Tuesday hot lunches served by the Catholic Workers and the many community members who join them — where it's not only about a hot meal or a bag of groceries or freshly washed and folded laundry — but it's about taking the time to talk story — to learn from each others stories — to see those in need not simply as “those in need” — but as sisters and brothers — as fellow travelers on this road of happy destiny.

The terrors of this world, when they come face to face with the glory of God, well, that is the poetry of Advent.

If we allow it to wash over who we are, if we resist the temptation to tie it down and wring out of it a confession, if we can listen in to the beehive, ski across the waters, and feel about in this dark room for the light switch, perhaps then we can “stand up and raise our heads, because our redemption is drawing near.”

+amen

“I don't think we'll ever understand Advent correctly until we see it as a preparation for a revolution.”

~ Robert Baron



The Saturday Morning Breakfast with the houseless is bringing together friends from all over town!! From our new friends, the **Chun family** who are members of the LDS church, to **Ronnie Kawakami**, a dean at the Law School, to our long time pals like **Lynette Shim** and our fearless leader **Charlie Kokubun**. It's a blast and a half every Saturday and YOU are most welcome to join in.....and best of all....it's totally free of charge!!!!!!!!!!!!



"Common Cause's **Corie Tanida** joins in with **Rae Costa** and Supreme Leader **Charlie K** as yummy grinds are prepared for hungry bellies!!"



Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with December birthdays!

Jeffrey Starkman	12/01
Gillian Batangan	12/02
Cheryl Mitsuka	
Alan Scroggie	
Peter Fan	12/03
Charles Steffey	12/04
Nip Repaky	
ShellieAnne Steffey	
Dexin Lu	12/06
Kais Eis	12/08
Christopher Lau	12/10
Lynn Pascua	12/11
Glory Ann Tokomaata	12/17
Jonathan Lau	12/18
Carla Pacupac	12/19
Carol Abe	12/20
Kaylen Hayashi	
Christine Toli	12/21
Catherine Chan	
Elizabeth Chan	
Susan Won	12/22
Gelacio Timonio	12/23
Delphine Shea	
Lisa Arakawa	12/27
Laureen Zane	12/28
Rally Muludy	12/29
Aaron Arakawa	12/30
Ieichy Mako	
Mildred Goo	12/31
Otega White	
Saimone Neset Jr.	

HAPPY BAPTISM!!



Our very own Michael Angelo of stained chapel doors, the inestimable **Dave Kleinschmidt**, has once again worked his magic in restoring these beautiful doors, donated by the Young family, to their original luster!! Thank you!!!!



On Sunday, November 18 we had the great pleasure of welcoming, through baptism, into the family of Christ, **Takai Jr. Tapuaki Mei Langi Pilesa Palavi, Faekitau Azariah Palavi, and Fatongiaolahelotu Pilesa Palavi, Jr.**, the children of **Christy and Ngia Palavi** and the grandchildren of **Christine and Molisi Toli!!!!!!** Congrats to you all and **WELCOME INTO THE COMMUNITY OF CHRIST!!!!!!**



If it's December, then that means its **Coins and Cash for Kenya!!!!!!** As we have for many years now, let's send some sorely needed funds to our pals in Kenya. Already the funds we have sent have made drastic differences in the quality of life for literally hundreds of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Where a cow can help sustain a village and some chickens can feed several families; where the folks there work really hard and are super appreciative, please be generous as our youngsters make this collection every Sunday during the Advent season.....**NOT IN CHURCH?????????** Noooooooo problem!!!!!! **Your check made out to St Elizabeth's with a memo section noting "Kenya Fund" will be gratefully accepted!!!!!!** Annnnd, it's tax deductible!!!!!!

THE THANKSGIVING EXTRAVAGANZA!!



In the wee hours of Thanksgiving morning, 34 wonderful folks came by to put together the amazing 250 all inclusive piping hot and deeeelicious thanksgiving plate lunches! You may count 33 but you forget **Caren Esaki**, our modestly generous photographer!!!!!! Many thanks to **Mo and Mel** for steaming approximately 700 kazillion tons of turkey and to all our other friends for donating and cooking all the others fixins!!!!!!!!!! **Blessings on you all!**

The gal giving free hugs is our modest, retiring, oh so shy, **Niambi!**



What a gorgeous crew!

A Message from the Youth Coordinator

By Melanie Langi

"It's the most wonderful time of the year!"

"Tis' the season to be jolly!"

Welcome Decem-burrrr!

Most of us look forward to this time of year and although Christmas sounds exciting, we tend to lose focus on its real purpose! The reason for the season, Jesus Christ! A birthday that's celebrated around the world with family traditions, attending Christmas parties, baking, cooking, decorating the house, putting up lights, and even singing carol's. A birthday often over shadowed by Frosty the Snowman, Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer, elves and non but the other...Santa Claus and a long list of many other fictional characters. Preparing for a party takes a lot of work, especially for us mothers. From the food, to the games, and gifts. Then having to clean up after. However as we invite our friends and family to partake in this celebration. We never invite the one whom we celebrate. We get caught up in the hustle and bustle of it all, we miss the purpose and the meaning. Jesus is often left outside, in the cold, away from his own birthday, uninvited.

This season as you plan your Christmas parties with loved ones, put up your tree, decorate your house, or smell those freshly baked cookies, remember the one whom we celebrate. Sing Happy Birthday Jesus, let's rejoice and celebrate the real reason of the Season! JESUS CHRIST!

Friendly reminders:

Please join us on **December 22 from 10am - 2pm for our Annual Neighborhood Childrens Christmas Party**. Lots of food, fun and celebrating Jesus!

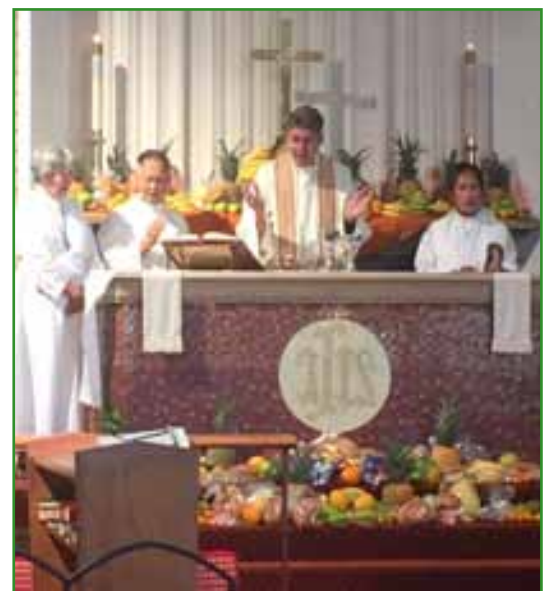
Continued Youth Bible Study once a week, at night, 7pm.
Come fellowship with us!



The pictures are from this years KBA's Christmas Parade.



Thank you everyone who shared your bounty of fruits and vegetables and those who received and shared with family and friends!



Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

After the opening reading, Ariel lights the candle as the Sunday School children look on.



The animals and mermaids will come out during the offertory each Sunday in Advent! Save your little extra change during the week & drop your donation in a **wild animal bucket** or a **beautiful mermaid** & think of the awesome friends we have in Kenya who will greatly appreciate your gifts this Christmas! Our **Kenyan friends** have made great strides in bettering their education and community sustainability. Thank you!!!!



First Sunday of Advent!

Advent is the first season of the Christian church year, leading up to Christmas and including the four preceding Sundays. The Advent season is a time of preparation for our hearts and minds for the anniversary of the Lord's birth on Christmas.

The Sunday School celebrates Advent by opening the Sunday service with a reading and lighting the candles on the **Advent Wreath**. The wreath & candles are full of symbolism tied to the Christmas season. The wreath, made of various evergreens signify continuous life. The circle of the wreath symbolized the eternity of God & the everlasting life we find in Christ.



The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent and one candle is lit each Sunday. Three of the candles are purple signifying a time of prayer, penance and sacrifice. Note one pink

candle!

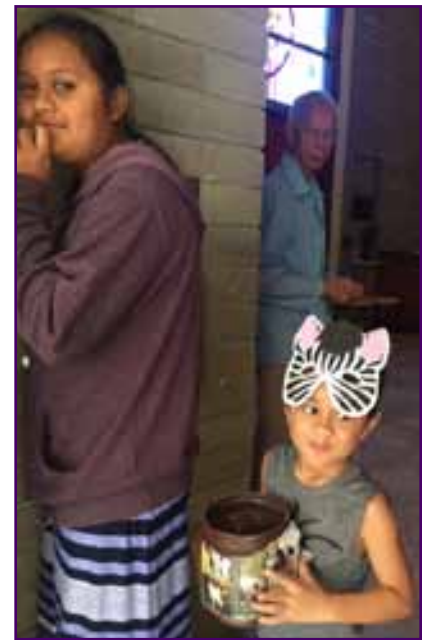
The first purple candle symbolizes HOPE; the second purple candle represents LOVE. On the 3rd Sunday in Advent the pink candle is lit, represents JOY and a shift toward celebration. On the 4th Sunday of Advent we light the final purple candle to mark the final week of prayer & penance. The final candle represents PEACE & reminds us of the message of the angels, "Peace on Earth, Good Will Toward Men".

On **Christmas Day** the white Christ Candle will appear, representing the life of Christ!

During Advent the Sunday School also thinks of others and send hope, love, joy and peace to not only their family and friends here but also those in faraway places, **especially the children in Kenya**. During Advent the 'wild animals' will appear during the offertory and ask for your generous donations to share with our friends in Kenya. Please give generously!

And to all of you, our dear ohana at St. Elizabeth's, the Sunday School children, helpers, teachers all thank you for your prayers and support throughout the year. A blessed Advent and a most blessed Christmas to all of you!

The Sunday school will be on recess December 30, 2018. Classes will resume on Epiphany - January 6, 2019!



NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC WORKERS



On Crèches, Nativities and Mangers

Do you know what a **crèche** is? Derived from French and Old High German, in most of the world the word refers to what we call in English nativity scene or manger. Around this time of year families pull out their nativity set, usually consisting of a miniature stable and figures representing **Mary and Joseph**, shepherds, farm animals, perhaps an angel or two. Often there are traditions specifying which figures are added, how and when, until on Christmas Eve the baby Jesus is gently laid in his crib.

The crèche has a history. Francis of Assisi had a special devotion to the infant Jesus who was born into the world in poverty, humility and simplicity. The saint considered these three virtues worthy of imitation in his life, and by extension in the lives of his Franciscan followers, including your servants **barbara, Niambi and David**.

The saint wanted nothing more than to visit the Holy Land to walk in the footsteps of his Lord, and to kneel at the humble birth site in Bethlehem. Determined as he was, each attempt St. Francis made to visit the Holy Land was thwarted: on the first, his ship was blown off course; on the second, he was struck with illness; on the third in 1219, he got as far as Egypt where the famous encounter with Malik al-Kamil, the Sultan of the Saracens occurred (that is another great story).



Thwarted yet determined, St. Francis hit on the idea that if he couldn't visit Jesus' birthplace, he could bring the birth scene to himself and his local community. According to *The Life of St. Francis* by the Franciscan monk **St. Bonaventure**, St. Francis told his companion, "I want to do something that will recall the memory of that **Child** who was born in **Bethlehem**, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by." Inspired by his vision, **St. Francis** staged the first nativity scene in **Greccio, Italy**, on Christmas Eve in 1223.

With permission from Pope Honorius III, **St. Francis** set up an empty manger (the feeding trough of farm animals which served as Jesus' crib) inside a cave, with hay and two live animals—an ox and an ass. It was just as it was believed to have happened on that first Christmas night. He invited the villagers and a priest to come celebrate mass in the cave while gazing upon the scene. The saint himself "preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of **Bethlehem**... That venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise."

Bonaventure also claims two miracles attached to the event; first, the baby Jesus himself appeared that night in the manger; and second, the hay used miraculously acquired the power to cure local cattle diseases and pestilences.

It was a glorious night, created by a simple man so devoted to Jesus that he wanted to impress upon the hearts of everyone how **Christ** came into the world in **poverty and simplicity**. The nativity scene's popularity took off first throughout Italy, then Europe and finally throughout the whole world until they are now a common place and a wonder of variety.

When you set up your creche, offer this Franciscan prayer:

Eternal God, as we celebrate again the birth of our Savior, may this creche be to us a sign of your love and self-giving, and through it may we draw nearer to the mystery of the **Word** made flesh: to you, **Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit**, be all praise and glory, now and forever. Amen.