

"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 2014

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Priest Associate

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Crossing Lines

by The Rev. David J. Gierlach

There was a priest in a real poor area of New York City who lived not in the church rectory but in a tenement apartment, and part of his ministry was inviting the street walkers who plied their trade of prostitution to come in and clean up, to rest, to have a bite to eat.

It was an odd arrangement and there was plenty of folks who sniffed at the idea with anything from figuring the priest was indulging in some free services to the pimps of the women who didn't want any other man having an influence on their lives.

And so the priest was often ostracized by the respectable folks and beaten up by the pimps.

Crossing lines is a hard thing to do.

I remember a couple of years ago a homeless fellow who also seemed to have some mental issues soiled himself badly, and then wandered onto our parking lot.

He smelled to high heaven, but there was Tom Ishida scrambling to get this fellow cleaned up, scrambling to find him some fresh clothes, and doing all of this as of it were the most normal thing in the world.

Crossing lines is what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

And that's where Jesus takes us this morning.

It's important to get what the scene is here in order to see what's actually going on.

When you first heard about this gal's five husbands you may have assumed that she's the Samaritan version of Elizabeth Taylor or Zsa Zsa Gabor — who — for the under 40 crowd here, are two women well known for their many marriages.

But, as I've mentioned a time or two before,

context is everything when you try to hear what scripture is saying, and in the case of our Samaritan woman, there's not a chance that she was some heartbreaking man-eater who changed her husbands like she changed her underwear.

In those days, only men could divorce a woman.

Women had no right to divorce a man.

And a woman without a man, in those days, is in a poor pickle indeed, since there are so many limits on what a single woman can do, who she can associate with, how she can earn a living.

The fact is, this gal is probably someone who cannot have children — barren they call her — and the reason she's at the well in the middle of the day, all alone, instead of coming with a group of women in the cool of the early morning, as one would expect in such a traditional culture, well, that's something we can relate to pretty easily — no one wants to catch what she has.

You know the story.

Someone has a string of bad luck in life, whatever that bad luck may be, and folks who know about it tend to stay away, tend to get a little superstitious, not wanting her bad luck to rub off on them.

Having had five men who dumped her, a 6th who won't even go to the trouble of marrying her, you don't need to be Sigmund Freud to realize that this is one hurting lady.

And that poses a problem for Jesus.

Because in that culture, in those days, not only did Samaritans and Jews hate each other, not only did they each regard the other as the worst sort of heretics, but a Jewish man was simply not permitted to talk story with a



Rector's Message, continued

Samaritan woman.

Which is why she is shocked when Jesus crosses the line and asks for a cup of water.

He asks for his need while at the same time knowing all about her need.

And while many folks think they hear Jesus talking about forgiving her sins when he's talking about the 5 husbands and the latest live-in, that's actually us putting a 21st century spin that gets it all wrong.

What Jesus knows about her is her lostness, her isolation, her shame — the shame that comes when we don't feel we've measured up, even through no fault of our own.

And into that shame, in her back and forth with Jesus, she begins to experience the unconditional love of God: "it's not on this mountain or that church where one comes into the presence of God — whenever you worship in spirit and in truth, there shall the living God find you!" he says to her, he says to us.

And then she seems to get that glimpse, that glimpse that tells her maybe this is the one — and Jesus responds to her insight using the exact same words that Moses hears from the burning bush when he asks God to name himself: as God from the bush says to Moses, so Jesus says to this woman: "I am."

Sitting on a dusty well in the heat of the noonday sun, engaging a woman whose poor luck has left her alone and ashamed, the fullness of God smiles.

Saint Paul says it this way:

"Everything of God gets expressed in Jesus, so you can see and hear God clearly.

You don't need a telescope, a microscope, or a horoscope to realize the fullness of Christ, and the emptiness of the universe without him. When you come to him, that fullness comes together for you, too." Col 2:9. (The Message Tr.)

And I think that's what she's feeling as she drops everything, including the water jug, and runs back to the town to share the good news that is even now embracing her: that no matter who I am, no matter what my life has been like, no matter the curses I secretly believe God has cursed me with, no matter the shames or secrets or lies I've told myself to make the unbearable seem somewhat bearable, in the face of all of my broken humanity, God is here, sitting right next to me, knowing me more intimately than I know myself, knowing everything I've ever thought, felt, fantasized, done or hoped to do, and in the midst of all of that knowing me through and through, this God LOVES ME!

Martin Luther, the founder of the Lutheran Church and the father of the reformation, always knew about this intimate knowledge God has of each of us, and for a long time, Luther HATED God for it.

It drove him crazy to think that no matter how hard he tried to be

holy, he continually messed up, and fumed at the idea that there was no way to hide from this all encompassing God — until he is given one day the grace to see that God doesn't love us for our good deeds, God doesn't love us for walking the straight and narrow, God loves us because God loves us — a free gift of grace — a chance to exhale — a chance to say thank you — and a chance to give that schmuck over there who irritates me a break, because God gives me a break every single day.

Crossing lines allows Luther to move from a faith based on his own abilities to please God to a faith that rests in the certain conviction that God loves us not because we are good, but because God is good.

Crossing lines is what sends the Samaritan woman urging her townfolk to "come and see," (the same invitation Jesus gives to the very first disciples in the very first pages of John's gospel) — crossing lines turns the life of that woman, a life that seems for all the world to be lost, she is turned into the very first apostle - who - like Mary Magdalene at the tomb that Sunday morning — is sent by Jesus to announce the good news she has seen and heard.

(I must say that I chuckle when our Roman brothers insist women can't be priests because no women were apostles: yet the very first apostles to be commissioned and sent by Jesus are indeed women: this Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene!

But that is a sermon for another day.....)

Crossing lines is what it means to follow Jesus.

Just last month, in the war ravaged Central African Republic, a country where Christians and Muslims for years lived together in peace, is now being torn apart by sectarian violence.

In response, "a Catholic church in one small town has taken in about 650 Muslims seeking sanctuary from Christian marauders. Father Xavier Fagba, the priest at the church, is determined to keep providing sanctuary ... because 'the Muslims discovered in our church, as we discovered about the Muslims, that the God we worship is the same God.'" Christian Century, 3/19/14, at 8.

In a similar way, the current president of Iran sent a check for \$400,000 to the only Jewish hospital in Tehran with the message that "our

Rector's Message, continued

government intends to unite all ethnic groups and religions, so we decided to assist you." Id.

Just a glance at the front page of the paper tells us we are living in times where the urgency for we Christians to cross the lines that divide us is profound.

Everywhere we look, it seems, smaller and smaller groups are splitting into opposing camps, seeing those who were once neighbors now as new found enemies.

More than ever, as followers of Jesus, you and I must needs make a daily practice of crossing lines for the sake of people everywhere, for the sake of God's good creation.

There is one last story, closer to home, that I learned of only yesterday.

I don't know if you remember about 12 years ago about a horrific murder here in town — a sailor killed his wife while making one of his three children watch.

After the sailor's arrest, the children were split up between three foster families.

A story about them ran in the morning paper, and a Muslim from Morocco, now living in Hawaii, and his Vermont born wife, decided to take in all three children — and ultimately they adopted the boys.

At first, because of the trauma, the boys were all flunking school - Fs in every single class.

Today, after a decade of love and hard work and healing, the children are not only flourishing, but the eldest expects to be admitted to MIT next year.

When I said to the fellow who told me the story (he is the father who adopted these children) that, wow, you saved their lives ... he softly shook his head and smiled, saying, no, they saved our lives.

Crossing lines is what it means to be a child of God.

And, I suppose that's the way it must be, for after all, in Jesus, God crosses the most basic line that could ever exist, the line between the Creator and the created—the line between the divine and we who are formed of the earth.

In Jesus, the God in whom we live and move and have our being comes to live and move and be with us, making it, if not safe, then at least possible, for us to cross lines for the sake of each other.

+amen



The Bishop is coming!
Sunday, April 6th at 9:00 am

**All are welcome to stay for pastries
and coffee after the service.**



Acolyte Brenson is lighting the candles on the Lenten Wreath prior to the start of the service.

The Lenten Wreath

On each of the six Sundays of Lent, one purple candle is extinguished, representing the dark days to come til on Easter Sunday the center white candle symbolizing Christ, remains the only one lit.

The Sunday School children all gather around the Lenten wreath as they walk in with the processional hymn and three readers share the story of Lent before one candle is extinguished. After the readings and the candle is extinguished, the children exit the church and go to their Sunday School classes.





Tongans Celebrate!

What a celebration as St. Elizabeth's welcomed and hosted the regional gathering of our Tongan Methodist friends (who, as we frequently remind them, are really Anglicans at heart!) from the West Coast of the big island of America! Over 30 folks traveled here for the event that lasted 4 days under the



protective covering of a magnificent white tent set up near Shim Hall, what with pigs a-roasting, food from everywhere and lots of smiling faces! **The Rev. Viliami Vakalahi** (above) addressed the congregation, sharing his thanks, his memories of our dearly departed **Rev. Saimone Lino** and expressing his great gratitude to everyone for making this such a successful gathering!

During the Mass we were serenaded by the soft and silky voices of members of the Tongan youth choir (*see top photo*) who sang an absolutely beautiful offertory hymn, we only wished they had another 10 verses to sing ...

just beautiful!

Lovely hula hands



As if the beautiful noise wasn't enough to satisfy our ears, the lovely **Anaseine Lino** (*above*) shared a gorgeous hula to welcome our mainland friends in traditional Tongan fashion by dancing to that traditional Tongan songstress, Celine Dion!

Remember boys, "Watch the hands!"



Easter Flowers

Donations will be gladly accepted for purchasing Easter flowers for decorating the church. **Deadline: April 14, 2014.**

Name _____

No. of plants @ \$5.00 each _____

In memory / honor of: _____

Basketball Team Looking Sharp!



The **St. Elizabeth's Saints** are shaping up and looking fine under the practiced eye of new head coach, **Joshua Yuen-Schat** who has signed a whole raft (*not rats, RAFT!*) of first round draft picks from the Central Middle School, all on his way to earning that multi-million dollar coaching contract we just signed him to! The new uniforms, displaying the pouring coconut designed by our youngsters, are TERRIFIC and many thanks once again to our pal **Keith Burdette** and the University of Kentucky Basketball team for providing the uniforms for our guys (and gals!)



By the way, I just heard that the University of Kentucky plays some pretty mean basketball...who knew?!!!

Look up! Look left!

Look at those legs of steel as these mighty young men sweat and strain, now in their 20th straight hour of grueling exhausting knee shaking belly wiggling brow squirting exercise! Paris Island has *nuthin'* on these guys!



Want to Get an In-depth Understanding of Your Christian Faith and Tradition?

Education for Ministry

Education for Ministry (EfM) is a training program of the Episcopal Church which helps people, especially lay leaders and ministers, to

- ✓ deepen their spirituality through an effective theological reflection process and to
- ✓ bridge the gap between understanding the Bible and dealing with the issues of everyday life.

Each session includes prayer, discussion, and reflection according to a Theological Reflection (TR) process, and may also allow time for refreshments and socializing before or after the class. Reading assignments prepare participants for each session.

Beginning in early September, 2014, St. Mary's and St. Elizabeth's will join to offer a year-long class of this four year program for members of their congregations. Participants must be willing to commit to an academic year of training (36 sessions of about 2.5 to 3 hours each). A free session can be given ahead of time for prospective members to see if this is "your cup of tea." To the degree possible, dates and times of sessions as well as class location will be scheduled after the class is organized to meet the needs of the participants.

Fee for the year-long class is \$350 per person. Online information is available at <http://theology.sewanee.edu/academics/education-for-ministry/>.

If interested, and to get more information, please contact **Fran Kramer** at 457-9753 or frankramer2011@gmail.com. Registration needs to be done by late July to place orders for books and to finalize the class preparations.

I'm Nobody! Who are you?

Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

Emily Dickinson



Attendance

Sunday, March 2	156
Shrove Tuesday, March 4	45
Ash Wednesday (Chinatown)	52
Ash Wednesday (Church)	68
Sunday, March 9	145
Wednesday, March 12	28
Sunday, March 16	167
Wednesday, March 19	23
Sunday, March 23	179
Wednesday, March 26	16
Sunday, March 30	210

New Ringers!



Please welcome **Collette Arakawa** and **Megumi Takushi** to the Handbell Choir!



Happy Birthday

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

Mother Imelda Padasdao	4/1
Nora Kurosu	4/1
Anau Tokomaat	4/1
Shawnalyn Sunagawa	4/2
Brillan Tulenkun	4/2
Apolonia Madriaga	4/3
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
Sulleti Lotaki	4/10
Alberta Eng	4/11
Belinda Chung	4/12
Flora Wong	4/12
Joseph Tom	4/14
Michael Young	4/14
Lauren Ho	4/16
Puanani Woo	4/17
Kenneth Nagamine	4/18
Herminio Resurreccion	4/19
Juan Ramos	4/22
Siaosi Tokomaata	4/24
Ellen Tom	4/25
Craig Kokubun	4/25
Chan Anaya	4/27
Joey Gierlach	4/28
Darrell Lum	4/28
Gilbert Batangan	4/29
Richard Ching	4/30
Lily Ho	4/30

Tangled in Thorns

Spirit said to me, "Dare not to untangle scorn from love."

Like roots in soil, so one is submerged in the other,
can a branch bear fruit if a root does not dare
to be consumed by the earth?

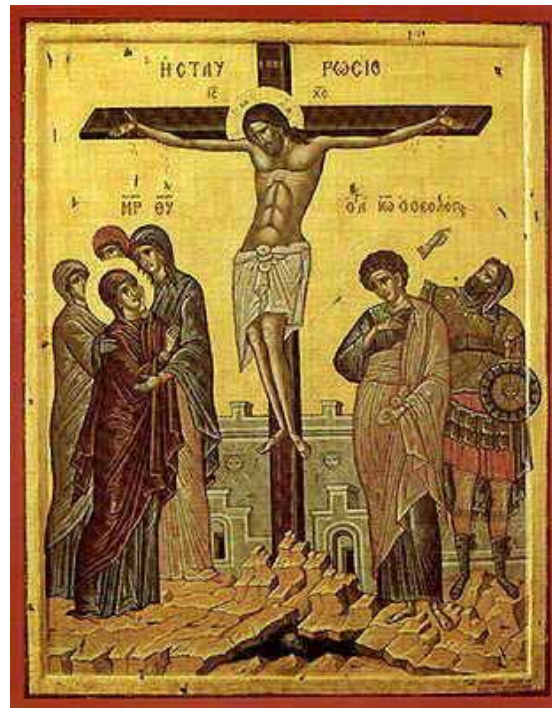
Never to see the light of the sun or feel the soft hands
and eager feet of a child as she scales the trunk upwards to the sky.
Can love bear fruit unless it dares to be consumed by scorn?
To feel the darkness of rejection,
the sting of bitter tears.

Spirit said to me, "Dare to become tangled in such thorns."
The blood they draw from your flesh is meant to be spilled.

Indeed, your heart beats for nothing less.

Soarin' Wheels of Heart

*The tragedy of modern man is not that he knows
less and less about the meaning of his life, but that it
bothers him less and less. -Vaclav Havel*



“All who believed were together and had all things in common, and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their numbers day by day those who were being saved.”

Acts 2:44-47



Unity is more than solidarity and more than uniformity. Unity is a commitment to becoming one people who speak in a thousand voices. Rather than one message repeated by a thousand voices, unity is one message shaped by a thousand minds.

J. Chittester

No Sunday School class on Easter Day!

The children are to sit in church with their family or friends. They are all very excited and looking forward to Easter! The Egg



Hunt is always on their minds! The Youth--**Villiami Lino, James Fitzpatrick, Sarah Kleinschmidt, Leyna Esaki, Seini Lino**--to name just a few, are already planning the festivities for the kids! Please donate eggs, eggs, and eggs... last year there were 50 baskets made! James

got dizzy just thinking of all the candy! Plastic eggs, egg stuffers (erasers, candies, stickers...) and hard boiled eggs! **Jamie Chok** will gather a group to dye all the eggs. There will be a sign up sheet for the eggs and please bring in your donations! Grandparents, Great-grandparents, aunts and uncles... if you are bringing little ones on Easter Sunday and they are not in Sunday School, please sign them up so we will something for them, too! All kids are encouraged to join in on the Easter fun after the Easter service!



Holy Week
Worship Services

Holy Week and Easter Schedule

Palm Sunday, April 13, 9:00 am Palm Sunday Procession,
Reading of the Passion according to Matthew

Maundy Thursday, April 17, 6:30 pm, Footwashing,
Stripping of the Altar

Good Friday, April 18, 12:00 noon Stations of the Cross
6:00 pm Good Friday Liturgy

Easter Day, April 20, 9:00 AM. Festival Holy Communion
Potluck brunch and Easter Egg
hunt following the service.