

"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 2016

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Does Jesus Matter?

The Rev. David J. Gierlach, rector

Why did Jesus die?

Most of us are taught at a young age this equation: People are sinners who owe a debt to God.

We owe the debt because our sin offends God and the offense must somehow be made right.

But the debt is too much for people to pay so God sends Jesus to pay it on our behalf.

Jesus dies on the cross, the debt is paid, heaven's gates are open, and all is well with us and God.

That's not in the Scriptures.

It's thinking that got it's legs in the eleventh century when lords owned estates and knights opened doors for ladies, days when a sense of honor and debt were front page news.

What that kind of thinking can leave us with is this: at best God is a little strange to demand the gruesome death of his Son for something the Son didn't even do - and at worst, God must be some kind of monster to require that deal — and yet, if it means our butts are safe after death — well, thank you very much!

All we need to do is muddle through this life the best we can, watching our backs, watching our bank accounts, fighting when necessary, and all will be well when we die.

This way of looking at why Jesus died puts humanity on the sidelines; God and Jesus do all the fixing, we just get the benefit.

And that's why, perhaps, many folks have no need for church, or at best will stop by occasionally to tip the hat at the bloodthirsty god who came up with this strange solution, and then get back to our everyday life in the every day world of dog eat dog.

But what if that's not the story of Jesus?

What if that's not the truth about God?

What if something very different is going on, something that takes us off the sidelines and puts us right into the game, something that requires our attention now, today, in this life — and what if that something has eternal consequences for everyone?

The story doesn't begin in the Middle Ages of Europe.

The story begins in Genesis, back in the garden, back to our first parents.

It begins with that fruit, that one thing in the garden forbidden to us.

Many folks think what was forbidden was fruit from the tree of knowledge, that God wanted us to be stupid.

Not so.

The forbidden fruit was fruit of the knowledge of good and evil: that's what was forbidden to us.

Why?

Because for whatever reason, we are not equipped to know the difference between good and evil.

I know that sounds strange.



Rector's Message, continued

Most people, certainly all religions, insist that our prime responsibility in life is to say what is right and who is wrong; to do our level best to try to live up to those standards and to reject those who don't.

And yet, ever since that fateful bite, the history of humanity has been one of conflict: between brothers and sisters, within communities, between nations.

Why?

Maybe it's because each side is convinced that they are the good, the right and the just — and the “other,” and there is always an “other,” is evil.

It works everywhere and it's at work today: between ISIS and the rest of the world, between democrats and republicans, capitalists and communists, Catholics and Protestants, Jews and Palestinians, and those two neighbors fighting over the location of a fence.

This is humanity's original sin, our insistence that we actually know how to tell good from evil: it is this sin that killed Jesus.

The best political minds, the best religious minds of the day, all came together and were unanimous in their very best thinking: this Jesus must die!

And here we are this Easter morning, and I ask you to consider that perhaps Jesus died not because some debt was owed to God, but rather to teach us how to live a life that refuses to enter the debate about what is good and who is evil.

Heresy you say?

Consider these things.

Look at all the rules, meaning, our definitions of good and evil, that God violates when he enters the world through Jesus.

Born to an unwed teenage girl.

Born in a barn.

In his public ministry, Jesus associates not only with the Rotary Club and the Masons, but with hookers and loan sharks and the disfigured and disabled and Roman soldiers and bleeding women.

He dies, naked and in agony on a gibbet reserved for the most notorious criminals: his final words, “forgive them, they don't know what they're doing.”

ALL a horror in his culture, ALL perhaps to show us that it isn't an angry God who needs to be paid back, but a loving God who wants everyone to be at home in this world, especially those who are seen as the “other.”

Jesus is the definition of the “other.”

To the Zealots he is a despised peacenik, to the Pharisees he is a law breaking scoundrel, to the priests, he is an ignorant tradesman, to the Romans, he is a dangerous subversive.

Jesus dies not because God is violent, but because we are, especially when it comes to the “other”; and the source of our violence is our insistence that we know the difference between good and evil.

Which is why Jesus says, over and over again, words we hate to hear:

“Don't judge.”

“Let the weeds and wheat grow together.”

“Remember, God is kind to the ungrateful, he gives rain to the undeserving.”

“Have you not heard, it is mercy, not sacrifice, that I desire?”

In short, don't worry about good and evil.

Worry about serving each other, forgiving each other, enjoying each other, and when you do, you will see God's kingdom right before your eyes.

Which brings us to this morning.

Where is he?

Having turned our wisdom on its head, the victim of a grisly murder engineered by the best and the brightest, after his stone cold body is put away (all proof that he was a fool or a charlatan!)..... where is he?

He isn't here.....

The tomb is empty, he's gone ahead, to Galilee, where it all began.

But there are strange reports.....he's showing up in unusual places....then disappears...

We walked with this stranger for miles and his words made our hearts burn, we broke bread with him, and lo and behold, it's the Lord!, then poof! he's gone!

Rector's Message, continued

His life and death were such public affairs.

His resurrection, an oh so private affair, just between Jesus and God....

Did he float out on a cloud all perfect and white or was he the gaunt, wounded man, stumbling out of the black mouth of the tomb, bare feet on muddy ground, still hurting, yet, with a look of stunned triumph?

— he lives — yet certainly he died.....

That God's love reaches into and beyond our violence, our judgments, our worst crimes is an invitation to all of us to stop arguing about who is right and what is wrong; to open our eyes to the garden that we all live in, this beautiful Earth.

With its abundance and beauty and enough for everyone if only we will share.

That's why we need the church every day.

We need to be with each other so that we can practice this new way of living with each other, because if you're anything like me, I constantly judge, I constantly size up, and I need constant reminders to knock it off.

It isn't a demanding God sitting on a throne in heaven who insists on the death of an innocent in order to pay a debt.

It is a loving God who lives among us, suffering our worst violence to show us that even our worst violence cannot separate us from the love of God.

To know this is to know eternal life.

Not something that begins after death, but a life infused with the yeast, the seed, the light, that is the resurrection of our Lord.

This is our faith.

This is why Jesus matters.

Will you come along?

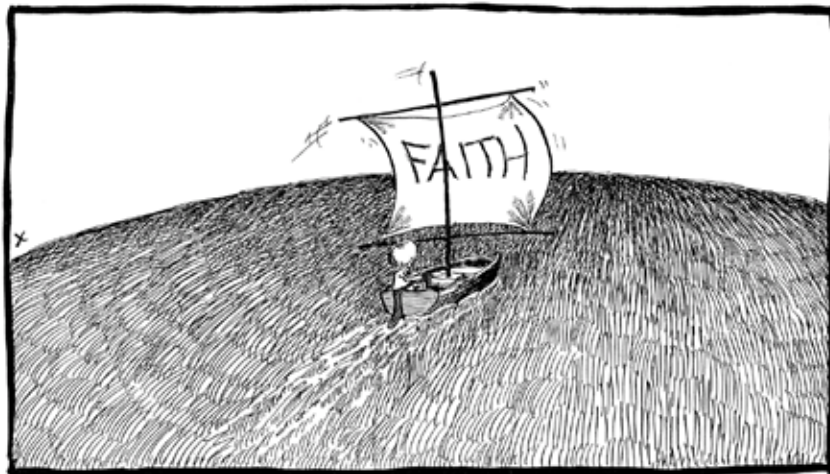
+amen

A Note To Our Readers

To you dear ones who read this newsletter but can't worship with us, please keep in mind an occasional gift to **St. Elizabeth's PASTORAL FUND**. Every Tuesday at 8 am sharp, there are maybe 70 folks in desperate need of a few bucks to keep the lights on or the roof over head or some food on the table. A little bit of moolah goes a long way in making a HUGE difference in the lives of so many.

And as the wise man once said: **"Money is like manure —it's not worth a thing unless it's spread around...."**

Many thanks and blessings! —Fr. David



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"Sin and grace, absence and presence, tragedy and comedy, they divide the world between them and where they meet head on, the Gospel happens. Let the preacher preach the Gospel of their preposterous meeting as the high, unbidden, hilarious thing it is."

Fred Beuchner

What's Going On At St. Elizabeth's?



The lovely ladies of St E's meet the last Thursday of each month at 10 am and learn and teach the art of lei making from islands all around the world! Wanna come by???? It's totally free and lots of fun!!

On March 13, we said a *bui bou* to these three wonderful and gifted leaders. (l-r) **Fane, Fran,** and **Preston** will be continuing on to other churches to fulfil their deaconate candidacy. Good luck to all of you, and God bless!

Fane is serving at **Good Samaritan Episcopal Church** in Palolo.

Fran is serving at **St Christopher's Episcopal Church** in Kailua.

Preston is serving at **St. Mary's Episcopal Church** in the McCully-Mo'ili'ili area.



At the same time we welcome the newest member to our team, **Mark Haworth**. Mark is currently a postulant for the priesthood here in the Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii. His home parish is **St. Clement's Episcopal Church** in Makiki, where he and his wife **Jill**, and 4 children, **Jessica, Tucker, Max** and **Tanner** have spent the past 25

years. Jill was actually baptized at St. Clements as a wee child! Mark and Jill were very active at St. Clement's, Mark as the past choir director, and Jill as a director of Family Ministries.

Along with his focus on his present as well as future ministry to the church, Mark is the president of **ConnectWorks Group Hawaii**, a marketing and advertising firm here in Hawaii. Mark serves on the board of directors for the **Keiki Injury Prevention Coalition** as well as the **Pa'ani Challenge**. He is so excited to be here at St. Elizabeth's for the next stage of his journey towards the priesthood.

Dear God,

Thanks for your very generous offer of salvation unto eternal life. I'm very aware that you've sacrificed quite a lot to make it available.

Unfortunately, I'm not happy with the terms and conditions, notably the power structure. I also find your take on "truth" quite undemocratic.

Let me hasten to add that I love Christmas and Easter (I'm a total chocaholic!) and I deeply appreciate you creating everything.

Nonetheless, I simply can't accept your offer at this time. Please feel free to contact me should anything change.

Amen



REJECTION PRAYER #22 - POWER & TRUTH

Chris Mangian www.camecia.com

Youth Report

By **Viliani Lino**

This Easter week, the youth spent 3 days camping in Camp Mokule'ia. The youth enjoyed their stay as they learned about the last few days Jesus went through during the Passover. They also prepared their own meals and led their own bible studies and some of them went kayaking for their first time. They all went home and said it was a spring break well spent. They are all refreshed and ready to finish the last quarter of this school year.

The fourth and last quarter of the year is not the only thing starting this year. Ku 'Ae Hou has started their fourth term with the theme :”You Got Served!!.” This past Monday, our youth and the children of the Waimanalo community learned the definition of service, and were challenged to do an act of service or kindness without asking for anything in return this week.

And last but not least, our basketball team has started conditioning for the summer Late Night Basketball League with the same goal to take the trophy this year. They will be in top shape and ready by the time Summer comes.



Ku 'Ae Hou



Enjoying a meal “The Passover” style.



Torres, Brenson, Inoleen, Nathan and Edibo having bible study



Nathan on a long board, Brenson and Torres Kayaking

March Attendance

Wednesday, March 2, Eucharist	16
Sunday, March 6, Eucharists & Vespers	230
Wednesday, March 9, Eucharist	20
Sunday, March 13, Eucharists & Vespers	176
Wednesday, March 16, Eucharist	13
Palm Sunday, March 20, Eucharists & Vespers	225
Maundy Thursday, March 24, Eucharist	49
Good Friday, March 25, Eucharists & Stations	108
Easter Sunday, March 27, Eucharists & Vespers	296



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Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

Blessed Easter to all!

The Sunday School gives thanks to all of you.

Holy Week was solemn and filled with dark symbols as we walked through the week into the alleluias of Easter.

The Sunday School children in classroom A made a 'one-cut cross' and shared them with the congregation on Easter Sunday! Some children took their papers home to make 'a lot', others were busy all throughout the lessons and music practice! They were handed out at the easter service. Want another? Ask one of the children and they will make one for you! Villiami Lino is the talented one-cut cross master!



The Tongan Youth perform before the Gospel on Easter Sunday.



The Sunday School perform during the offertory on Easter Sunday.

filled the thousands of plastic eggs donated by the congregation with the donated pounds of candy, and the many others of you who generously filled the donated eggs at home and brought them back for the Egg Hunt, and then there were others who sent plastic eggs all the way from Oakland! There were so many, many, many eggs! And we must not forget the hard-boiled eggs - all 180 cooked by the Tongan campers, then dyed by Miss Jamie, Miss Lillian and the young campers! Over 1000 eggs!!!! What joy to all the children, from 1 to 92...as they walked out of the church and saw all the eggs on the grass!!!! Thanks to Caryn Esaki and Darryl for putting together all the baskets and bags that the children took home with their eggs!

On Easter, our awesome Tongans performed an Easter tribute during the Gospel hymn. The Tongan Sunday School children along with their older siblings, cousins, auntys and uncles were very inspiring!

The children lifted their voices in song and sang the Offertory hymn on Easter. Thanks to Mary Ann Lentz and Saone Lino - the children never missed a beat! And what wonders did those spring flowers look on the girls' heads!!! The big Easter bunny mentioned how she missed seeing spring Easter bonnets in church...

Thanks to Sarah, and crew, her Plaza residents who



A few of our members showing off their one-cut crosses!



Mahalo to all of the residents at the Plaza who helped fill thousands of eggs for our Easter Egg Hunt! The kids really enjoyed themselves, as you can see...



Holy Week Highlights

Palm Sunday

Luke 19:38 – *Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!*



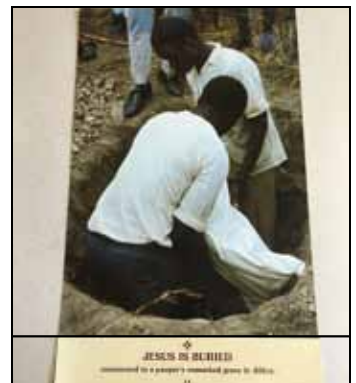
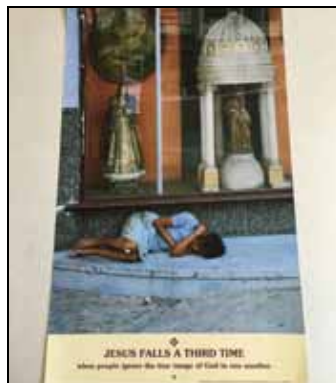
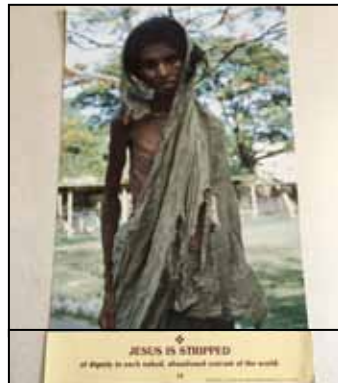
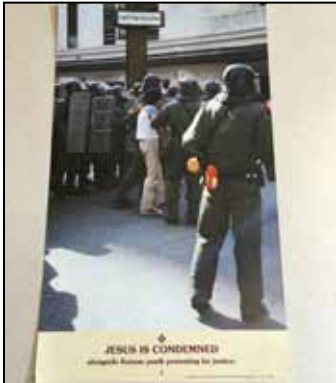
Maundy Thursday

John 13:15 – *For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.*



Good Friday

John 19:30 – *He said, 'It is finished.' Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*



Easter

Luke 24:5 – *“Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.”*



Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with
April birthdays!



Mother Imelda Padasdao Nora Kurosu Anau Tokoma'ata	April 1
Shawnalyn Sunagawa Brillian Tulenkun	April 2
Apolonia Madriaga Sharon Oshiro	April 3
Kit Hawkins Ka'alaneo Blaisdell-Higa	April 6
Joelynne Tagle	April 7
Father David Gierlach Tasy Robert	April 8
Santereen Kom	April 9
Dolores Peralta Sulieti Lotaki	April 10
Alberta Eng	April 11
Belinda Chung	April 12
Michael Young	April 14
Lauren Ho	April 16
Puanani Woo	April 17
Kenneth Nagamine	April 18
Herminio Resurreccion	April 19
Juan Ramos	April 22
Siaosi Tokoma'ata	April 24
Ellen Tom Craig Kokubun	April 25
Chan Anaya	April 27
Joey Gierlach Darrell Lum	April 28
Gilbert Batnagan	April 29
Kayli Ho	
Richard Ching Ralph Arellano	April 30

Episcopal Bishops Issue A Word to the Church

[March 15, 2016] The House of Bishops of The Episcopal Church, meeting in retreat, unanimously approved the following Word To The Church.

A Word to the Church

Holy Week 2016

"We reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others."

On Good Friday the ruling political forces of the day tortured and executed an innocent man. They sacrificed the weak and the blameless to protect their own status and power. On the third day Jesus was raised from the dead, revealing not only their injustice but also unmasking the lie that might makes right.

In a country still living under the shadow of the lynching tree, we are troubled by the violent forces being released by this season's political rhetoric. Americans are turning against their neighbors, particularly those on the margins of society.

They seek to secure their own safety and security at the expense of others. There is legitimate reason to fear where this rhetoric and the actions arising from it might take us.

In this moment, we resemble God's children wandering in the wilderness. We, like they, are struggling to find our way. They turned from following God and worshiped a golden calf constructed from their own wealth. The current rhetoric is leading us to construct a modern false idol out of power and privilege. We reject the idolatrous notion that we can ensure the safety of some by sacrificing the hopes of others. No matter where we fall on the political spectrum, we must respect the dignity of every human being and we must seek the common good above all else.

We call for prayer for our country that a spirit of reconciliation will prevail and we will not betray our true selves.

The Episcopal Church House of Bishops met in retreat March 11 – 15 at Camp Allen Conference Center in Navasota, TX.