

"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 2014 **Come Down!**

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The Reverend David J. Gierlach

Every time you take your seat in these pews, I wonder if in the back of your mind, there is the question: "Is there a word from the Lord today?"

I think, for everyone here, that question whispers itself, to the conscious or unconscious mind.

"Is there a word from the Lord today?"

It is the question on my mind each and every week as the struggle to hear what ought to be said consumes waking and sleeping hours.

And while sometimes the word comes as sunshine and laughter, at other times the word comes as a kind of terrifying hope.

Sometimes, the teaching is a hard one.

Like today's teaching, when the Word of the Lord seems to propel us from the ancient past right into today's headlines.

So it is in the first line of the very first reading.

The lament cried out by the prophet Isaiah, a lament that echoes down through the ages:

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

I heard that lament ringing in my ears as I read the headlines and saw the video of the rage in Ferguson; a rage fueled as much by that particular incident as by an overwhelming sense of helplessness so many

of our citizens feel — that some have never been and will never be accepted as having the same dignity and humanity as others.

Or the nonstop stories of how our political machinery has frozen solid at the national level.

Or how the streets of Honolulu are more and more reflecting the streets of some of the poorest third world nations.

And if that's not enough, let our gaze drift farther afield.

Much of the Middle East, the cradle of the world's great faiths, is on fire.

Nigeria is in the grip of bandits who steal young women and turn them into slaves.

Israel continues to poke sticks in the eyes of Palestinians with ever more aggressive settlements while Hamas earlier this year launched a pointless and disastrous barrage against Israel.

And so this first Sunday of Advent, the prophet so fittingly cries out in sorrowful lament:

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

Isaiah shouts his plea as Israel's king sets course for a war that will end in disaster-- it is a plea as pressing today as it was then.

People often ask why the Church isn't more festive in these weeks leading up to



Rector's Message

Christmas?

After all, look at all the commercials!

They have the warm, fire-lit sentimentality of Christmas all aglow — as early as the day after Halloween!

But not the church.

Advent is, for us, a time of taking stock, of preparation, and of anticipation.

It's why you see your church and your clergy decked out in purple, after so many months of green or white.

Purple is a sign of bruises, bruises that come so naturally in a world where humanity pretends to be God.

During Advent, we are urged to remember that left to our own devices, our goose is as cooked as yesterday's turkey, as Yogi Berra liked to say.

Where can we turn for help?

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

Such is the prayer of the church every Advent season, it is a longing for the often silent, seemingly absent God, to show his face, in ways that are unmistakable, bold and convincing.

"O that you would tear open the heavens and come down!"

It is a lament that also says much about how we understand God's relationship to us.

Many of us have a picture of that God, sitting on the sidelines of the world, peering over the rails on the 50-yard line, maybe a bag of popcorn in hand, watching what we're up to.

And yet, on this first Sunday of Advent, as we gather in the midst of so much strife, so much acrimony, so much fear, we Christians are coaxed to remember that the God "up there," made his way down here, with us, and remains with us every minute of every day, if only we have the eyes to see, the ears to hear.

I'm reading again Eli Wiesel's first book.

He calls it "Night."

You can only read this book a few pages at a time.

It's about Wiesel as a youngster, barely in his teens, when the Nazi's come to his small village in Transylvania and kidnap every Jewish child, woman and man, and in railroad cars barely suited for cattle, deliver these human beings into the furnaces and slave lines of Auschwitz.

It was during Holocaust that the Jewish people came face to face with where to look for God: was God "up there" or was God somewhere else?

Some answered that God is neither up there nor somewhere else: that God simply isn't.

The horror of holocaust was the end of faith for many.

For others, perhaps even Wiesel himself, God is found in the very midst of incomprehensible suffering.

Wiesel recounts the horrifying day that the Nazis hanged several young boys, boys who took a long time to die on the gallows.

An old man yelled out in the midst of this horror: "Where is God?!"

And Wiesel heard his heart answer: "God is there, hanging on the gallows."

Advent is the time we gather together to remember, to re-experience, that ours is a God who gets down in the muck with us.

We will hear it in the coming weeks.

"He was despised and rejected, a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.

We turned our back on him and looked the other way.

He was despised and we did not care." Isaiah chapter 53, verse 3.

And when Isaiah's king wanted God to provide an army to Israel, rather than an army, the prophet saw that:

Rector's Message

"The Lord himself will give you a sign.

The young woman will conceive a child and give birth to a son; she will name him Immanuel, God with us." Isaiah chapter 7, verse 14.

Rather than an army, God gives a child.

Rather than brute force, our God meets us in weakness.

For reasons we may perhaps someday come to understand, the Living God chooses to enter our lives not from a high and mighty place, but at the edges, in the midst of what is troubling, confusing, even confounding.

The Living God is a gentle God, not rescuing us from life's troubles, but walking with us through all that comes.

As so many line up in obedience to the cultural command to "shop till you drop," we are called to look for a star, the sign of he who is coming.

As the powers that be insist that we run into the wilderness of fake cheer and blown budgets, we are invited to kneel quietly in prayer, that we might be filled with the peace of God.

As nations continue to rattle sabers and politicians worship at the altar of redemptive violence, we gather together to remember who we are, to commit ourselves yet again to becoming a people created by the suffering God who is nearer to you than your breath - this suffering God, who brings the dead to life!

Is there a word from the Lord today?

+amen

"Incarnation enables us to be both hopeful and realistic. We have seen the Light that means to shine everywhere; for us a new world has dawned but not completely, not yet. Incarnation is not only about the birth of a baby at Bethlehem but also the brutal crucifixion of an innocent man on Golgotha. We didn't know how far God intended to take Incarnation until we stood at the foot of the cross. 'Love came down at Christmas,' as we sometimes sing, and love also came down on Good Friday."

W. Willimon

"To pray...

is to take notice of the wonder, to regain a sense of the mysterious that animates all beings, the divine margin in all attainments. Prayer is our humble answer to the inconceivable surprise of living.... As a tree torn from the soil, as a river separated from its source, the human soul wanes when detached from what is greater than itself. Without the holy, the good turns chaotic; without the good, beauty becomes accidental...."

Abraham Heschel



Thanksgiving with Bernice Kau



(L-R) **Del Shea, Bernice Kau** and **Fran Kramer** celebrated Thanksgiving at Palolo Chinese Home.

St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church

Cordially invites you to
Our Wine Tasting Event

A Taste of St. Elizabeth's

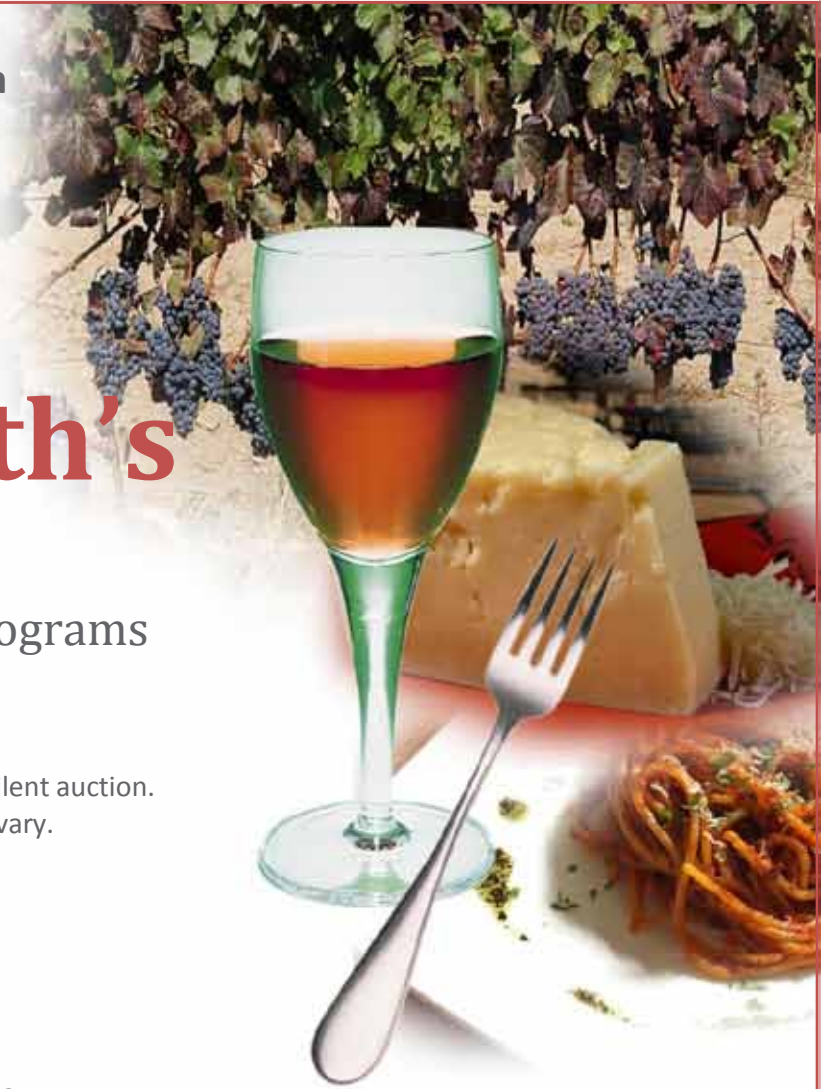
All Proceeds to Our
Outreach & Scholarship Programs

Tickets: \$35 per person

Enjoy fine wines, great gourmet foods and a silent auction.
Silent auction begins at 6 p.m. and prices will vary.

December 13th
6:00 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

720 North King Street,
Honolulu, Hawaii, 96817 *Parking is available.*



ST. ELIZABETH'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH Pledge for 2015

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Email _____

I offer this pledge with gratitude for the blessings poured out by God on me and those I love. This year, I shall give ____% of my income or \$_____ over the course of the year; or \$_____ each month; or \$_____ each week -- so that the mission and ministry of St. Elizabeth's may continue to grow for another 112 years. May God give me the generosity of spirit and trust in Him to make these offerings in His name. Amen.

Please check here if you would like offertory envelopes.



Way to go, gang!



Led by the **Langi family**, many members of the congregation decided to celebrate Thanksgiving with folks living nearby on the streets. And so, the night before the feast day and all that morning, over 100 plates of the traditional good stuff was prepared and then delivered all along the stream stretching from Palama to Nimitz Highway. Great job!



An Amish boy and his father were in a mall. They were amazed by almost everything they saw, but especially by two shiny, silver walls that moved apart and then slid back together again. The boy asked: "What is this, Father?" The Father said he'd never seen such a thing and had no idea. As they watched, a heavy set older lady limped into the opening doors, pushed a button and disappeared inside. The farmer and his son watched as circular glowing numbers moved up and up. Then, just as quickly, they watched as those glowing numbers reversed themselves. The doors opened and a gorgeous 23 year old model stepped out. The father said quietly to his son: "Go get your mother."

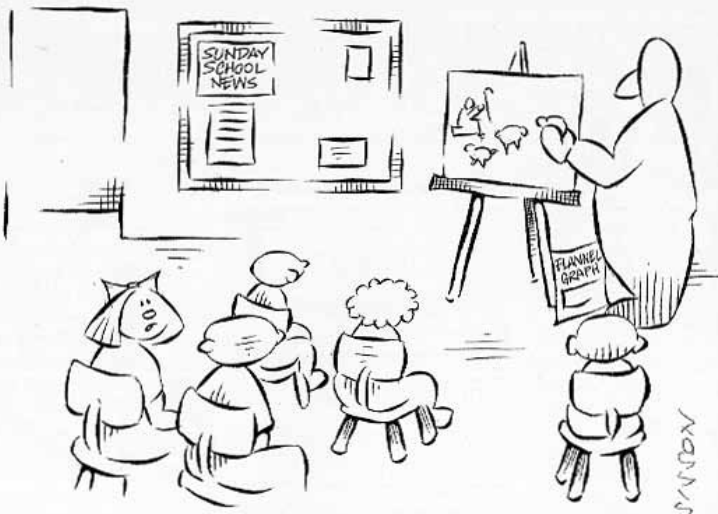


Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with December birthdays!

Jeffrey Starkman	12/1
Alan Scroggie	12/2
Cheryl Mitsuka	12/2
Gillian Batangan	12/2
Peter Fan	12/3
Nip Repaky	12/4
Charles Steffey	12/4
ShellieAnne Steffey	12/4
Dexin Lu	12/6
Christopher Lau	12/10
Jonathan Lau	12/18
Carla Pacupac	12/19
Jacque Gierlach	12/20
Kaylen Hayashi	12/20
Carol Abe	12/20
Susan Won	12/22
Gelacio Timonio	12/23
Delphine Shea	12/23
Christine Ling	12/24
Lauren Zane	12/28
Rally Muludy	12/29
Aaron Arakawa	12/30
leichy Mako	12/30
Mildred Goo	12/31
Otega White	12/31
Saimone Neset Jr.	12/31

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"I'm attempting to work this into my belief system."

Tutoring Project



The after school tutoring program is going full steam ahead, what with a couple UH students, a few parents and our own Melanie Langi doing a great job of helping our youngsters keep on track with their schooling! Our gracious friends at HCAP are also letting our kids use the Mac computers in the learning lab in Shim Hall. Thanks, HCAP!

Palama Christmas Parade



The annual Palama Christmas Parade saw the Tapa decorated float mobile manned by a great bunch from St E's as ukuleles strummed, guitars wafted and the sweet voices of Tonga made their melodies throughout the night. A great time was had by all. And a heads up: This gang is going Christmas caroling and may show up at a house or apartment or garage near you! If so, you are blessed!!

Remember Your Beloved with a Poinsettia



Donations will be gladly accepted for purchasing poinsettias to decorate the church for Christmas—in memory or in honor of a loved one. **Deadline is December 14, 2014.**

Name _____

Number of poinsettias @ \$8.50 each _____

In memory / honor of (*please circle*) _____

Attendance

11/2	Sunday	221
11/9	Wednesday	37
11/16	Sunday	184
11/19	Wednesday	27
11/23	Sunday	210
11/26	Wednesday	17
11/27	Thanksgiving Day	84
11/30	Sunday	224

Social Action Month



November seemed to become social action month for St. Elizabeth's -- even more than the usual. We sponsored the governor of Chuuk state who, along with several governmental dignitaries from Micronesia, held a forum for their people to discuss the challenges and opportunities this population faces in Hawaii.

The Hawaii Health Connector also came by at the same time to enroll folks in Obamacare. It seems that Obamacare may provide a solution to the termination of Medicaid benefits for our Micronesian friends. Most folks will be eligible for generous government subsidies so they can purchase private insurance..... Too soon to tell if this will actually fix the problem, but it sure is a step in the right direction. The big key is getting folks informed and signed up during the open enrollment period.



On top of that, St. E's played a key role in the FACE Housing Summit, at which our very own **James Fitzpatrick** gave a rousing introductory speech outlining the serious issues we as a State confront in the area of affordable housing. James hit a home run as he sized up the problem and gave an outline of potential solutions, all while introducing the keynote speaker, **Mayor Kirk Caldwell**. Over 250 people from the development world, the finance world, the "I need a home world," and concerned citizens were there with lively panel discussions on issues from affordable rentals to Transit Oriented Development to homelessness and more.



James Fitzpatrick at the FACE Housing Summit.



The Hawaii Health connector tent was set up in the parking lot of St. Elizabeth's to make it easy for folks to sign up for Obamacare.





Mark your calendars for this St. E's tradition



Neighborhood Children's Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 20
10 am to 2 pm**



Elves of all ages are welcome! Presents and food provided courtesy of the Outreach Fund!



Scenes from last year's Christmas party.

Christmas Services

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, Dec. 24th, 9:00 pm.
A Service of Lessons and Carols

Music by the Handbell Choir, the Tongan Choir,
the Filipino Choir, and the Chuukese Choir
Favorite Christmas hymns
Festival Holy Eucharist

Christmas Day

Thursday, Dec. 25th, 9:00 am Festival Holy Eucharist



*Please invite your family, friends, and neighbors
to join us in the worship of the newborn King.*