

*"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 2012 **Apocalypse**

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*The Reverend David J. Gierlach*

I'll bet that not one Episcopal Church in a hundred will be speaking about apocalypse today.

We Episcopalians like the parables, we like the wisdom stories, we like the moral teachings; but for most of us, we'd prefer to leave the "end of the world" stuff to the evangelicals and their brand of Christianity.

On Tuesday, I was at Palolo Homes where a whole bunch of renovations are getting started, and the Kahu who came for the blessing started chatting me up.

He was remembering back in the 1980's being at Palolo Homes with a 16 mm movie projector showing "End of Days" movies on the side of the buildings to the residents; and as he kept talking, I slowly edged away from him, since that kind of theology is focused way too much on who's in and who's out whereas Jesus is always on the hunt for those who are out, doing his best to bring them in....

As you know, Jesus' attitude about who's in and who's out is usually very different from ours.

So, "End Times" are something we don't often talk about; but the fact is; we ought to; and so, this morning, let's be that one Episcopal Church in a hundred that talks about apocalypse.

Let's talk about it because that's what Jesus is talking about this morning; and heaven knows, you're not here for what David has to say.

No, the question we all have is: "Is there a word from the Lord today?"

"Apocalypse" is defined as "the end of the world;" an event our faith acknowledges

will occur someday; but when that day is, no one knows.

And because Jesus is so clear about our inability to know when that day will be; those who rake in money hand over fist assuring others that they have the inside scoop are probably better off selling used cars, or Amway products, instead of misleading good-hearted but gullible people with fear mongering.

As for the ultimate end, no one knows the day or the hour, not the angels, not even the Son, but only the Father.

So it is for the ultimate end of all things.

But apocalypse is not only the "end of the world" writ large; it also comes as the end of your world or mine.

Apocalypse comes in the devastating stroke that has afflicted our friend James.

Apocalypse comes in the cancer that the medications are no longer controlling.

Apocalypse comes in the untimely deaths of our children, our husbands, our wives, our friends.

It is true that apocalypse is about endings.

But it is not only about endings — indeed, it is not ultimately about endings; apocalypse is about endings that promise to lead to new birth, to new life, to new beginnings —this is the story of apocalypse.

It comes when the seed falls to the ground and dies. It comes whenever a wronged person forgives an injustice.

It comes when we really and truly love our enemies, especially, perhaps, when the



# Rector's Message

enemy is a member of our own household.

And it comes in other ways as well.

Apocalypse is the second son leaving home and blowing through his misbegotten early inheritance; only to return home into the outstretched arms of a Father who runs with joy to welcome the boy who was once lost, and who is now found, who was dead, and is now alive.

Apocalypse is Lazarus dead in his grave, sisters inconsolable, only to be summoned forth days later with the magnificent cry from outside the tomb: "Lazarus, come out!"

Apocalypse is the death necessary for new life to emerge: and that is why Jesus speaks of these horrors not as ends in themselves, but as birth pangs.

I don't know why suffering is the path to new life; I only know that it is; with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus standing before our very eyes, as God's reassuring "yes" to our fear and confusion....

How we deal with suffering in the world, how we approach our own suffering, will, over time, shape the lives we are given to live, here and now.

As many of you know, I am a former Roman Catholic.

There are more than a few of us ex-Romans in this congregation; and I often joke with one of our friends here at St. E's who I know sometimes feels a tug to explore what Rome has to offer.

Because of my own background, I often think about what is similar between the Roman and Episcopal churches.

Both have priests and nuns. Both have a head of the church who lives in a foreign country. The Mass, with its focus on the Eucharist, is very similar. I think too, sometimes, of how we are different from each other.

These differences, I think, while often subtle, are probably why so many of us former Roman Catholics have come to make our home here in the Episcopal Church.

One friend of mine likes to call us "Catholic Lite," as if we were a bottle of beer.

Another calls us "Catholics with an attitude."

Or as Robin Williams put it: "The Episcopal Church, all of the pageantry, none of the guilt!"

Perhaps there is truth in all of these observations.

However, the real difference between our two faiths, I think, is not so much in what we believe but in what we emphasize.

Many years ago, before I was ordained, and while still at my home church in Kahalu`u, Saint John's by the Sea, I was given the opportunity to preach from time to time as a licensed lay preacher.

Fr. Charlie Hopkins, my friend and mentor, was the vicar.

One week, my sermon was about a

young couple from Maryland, who, the newspaper reported, had a child out of wedlock in a motel; and, to avoid telling their parents about this birth, suffocated the newborn girl and placed her body in the motel dumpster.

My sermon that week focused on the continuing presence of evil in the world and my comments spoke of our sinfulness and the challenges our faith puts to us to change.

My comments were heavy on the Roman point of view.

The following Sunday, Fr. Charlie also spoke to that same story of the Maryland couple in his sermon.

He reflected that the love of God is strong enough to reach out to everyone, including those young people in Maryland.

He commented that if we really believe what was revealed to St. Paul, that neither sickness nor persecution nor even death can separate us from the love of God, then even at our weakest, even in our turning away from God, the loving Father turns his face toward us, and with arms outstretched, embraces us.

I have to say, I have thought a lot about Charley's comments over the years —and it keeps me thinking about what it means to be a Christian in the Episcopal Church.

As a Roman Catholic, I spent a great deal of time thinking about my unworthiness in the face of God.

So much effort was spent focusing on the

## THE FAMILY CIRCUS



"...he knows all the words to the songs."

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*  
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# Rector's Message

failures, the lack, the inability to measure up.

Don't get me wrong; much in the Roman tradition celebrates the love of God, just as much in that tradition rejoices in the God who loves us more than we can know.

But the Episcopal emphasis, it seems to me, leans with a deeper assurance on the unfailing love of God that, here and now, accepts us in every circumstance in life.

Everyone is welcome in the household of God.

The door is shut to no one.

Knock, and the door will be opened; ask and you will receive.

A loving God is always reaching out to us, ready to embrace, ready to heal.

It seems to me, especially when the focus today is on last things, that the Episcopal focus is a worthy, Gospel-rooted, focus.

The fact is, how we see our relationship with God has much to do with how we relate to each other.

If we think of ourselves as failures in the sight of God, won't we see ourselves as failures in the eyes of others?

If we believe in a God who is quick to judge and slow to forgive, will we treat each other any differently?

On the other hand, if we live with confidence that we are loved and treasured by God; won't we be more inclined to treat others in the same way?

At the end of the day, so much of what counts as happiness in this life, what counts as a sense of peace, no matter what happens, depends on our attitude toward God, on our attitude toward each other, on our attitude toward ourselves.

I have a story to share with you today about attitude.

It's about a young couple who just got married.

On their wedding night, soon after getting to their hotel room, this husband, clearly from the old school, takes off his pants, throws them on the ground, and says to his wife: "Wife, put those pants on!"

The wife says: "I can't wear those pants!" To which the husband replies: "You're right, and don't you ever forget it!"

Well, the wife, not to be out done, takes off her little panties and, throwing them on the ground, says: "Husband, get into those panties!"

The husband says: "I can't get into those!" And the wife replies: "You're right, and you won't until you change your attitude!"

I believe his attitude changed completely that very night!

And then there is this story.

It's about a young Jewish girl in Nazi Germany whose cat, that very morning, had kittens.

It turns out that the propagandist, Goebbels, was at her school that day and he overheard the young girl telling her friends with excitement:

"My cat just had kittens, and they're all Nazis!" Goebbels thought this would be a great propaganda piece.

So he arranged, a few weeks later, for the young girl to be on the radio to say what she had said in school.

The program is announced, and on that day, Goebbels says to the girl: "Hey Jew, tell us about your kittens!"

And the little girl replies:

"My cat had kittens, and they're all social democrats!"

Well, Goebbels is all shook up.

"That's not what you said before!"

And the little Jewish girl says:

"My cat had kittens, and they were all Nazis — and then their eyes were opened."

Their eyes were opened.

Apocalypse, endings, suffering -- even confronting our stereotypes and prejudices -- all of these have one end —one promised end —to open our eyes to the God who is nearer to us than our breath, to the God who is more faithful than the sunrise.

And so this day, in the very midst of our own endings, in the midst of our own apocalypse, on this day, may we open our eyes, and rejoice with the Psalmist who sings:

*"My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices; my body also shall rest in hope. For you do not abandon me to the grave, nor let your holy one see the Pit. You show me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures for evermore."*

+amen



*"O.K., so the meek shall inherit the earth, and the rich will have a hard time getting into Heaven. But what about the middle class?"*



## Presiding Bishop Visits St. Elizabeth's!

by Sue Yap

What a whirlwind of a morning that began in Shim Hall on November 10th with the **Presiding Bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori** and presentations by the Na Hoku Mele children and mentors, moving into St. Elizabeth's Church where Fr. David shared a very brief history of St. Elizabeth's with the Presiding Bishop. The Filipino Choir was first to sing, Mother Imelda presented a lei to the Presiding Bishop and then into the second song invited the Presiding Bishop to sing with them! The Chuukese Choir followed. The Sunday School lined up next to sing, *When the Saints Come Marching In...* (we will get to the next verse by the time we sing this song again!) The last group to sing was the Tongan choir. Everyone did a really great job!

Then the congregation went back into Shim Hall where Na Hoku Mele programs continued with entertainment

for the Presiding Bishop, concluding with a blessing at the table with the food and the Presiding Bishop visited with the HCAP program in the adjoining room to hear and see what other programs are happening at St. Elizabeths. One team of 4th graders of the 'Palamabots Robotics' was demonstrating the robots. The representatives from HCAP were very knowledgeable about the programs and latest developments going on. They had a very short slide show presentation and also shared how the computers were now linked with the UH and the kids can do their homework with help from UH students via the computers.



The Filipino Choir was the first group to sing for the Presiding Bishop.



*Na Hokulele and Sunday Schools Children show their work to the Presiding Bishop.*



*The Chuukese Choir in their colorful red costumes.*



*The incredibly talented Tongan choir nearly blew the roof off the church!*

The Presiding Bishop was whisked away back to St. Andrew's Cathedral, already late but back to convention and more meetings and luncheon with the Episcopal Church Women. She only had a chance to 'inhale' and peek into the HCAP box of pastries and the feast we were about to partake in Shim Hall when she left!

And it was a feast... thank you to all who shared your time and talent in preparing and purchasing the food, food and more food! Thank you to all who participated in the programs and sharing your programs of ministry with the Presiding Bishop. It was a very special day in the life of St. Elizabeth's Church... and our great once-in-house photographer **Kit Hawkins** with camera in hand never missed a snap...can't wait to see his photos!!! Thanks also to **Mother Jodene** for stopping by from the busy convention going on at the Cathedral!



*Big smiles from Mother Jodene and Arleen Young.*



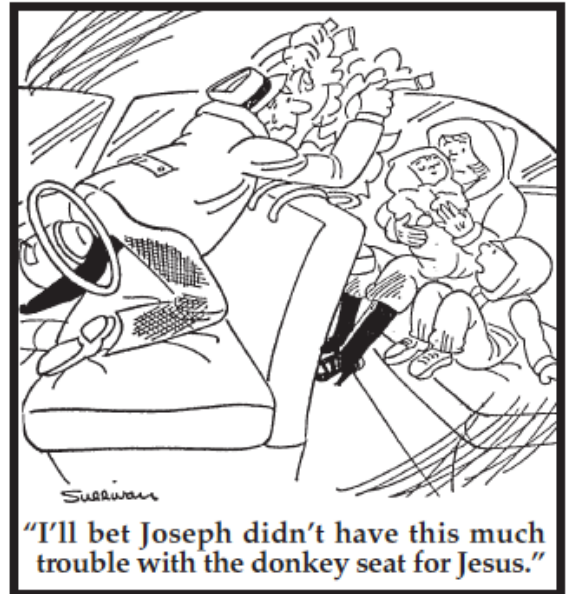
*The Middle School and High School youth did presentations reflecting on HONESTY, INTEGRITY and RESPECT!*

More pictures of the Presiding Bishop's visit can be found on our website, [www.stelizabeth720.org](http://www.stelizabeth720.org).

# 2nd Bizarre Bazaar is a Success



Lots of stuff for sale at the 2nd Annual Bizarre Bazaar.



"I'll bet Joseph didn't have this much trouble with the donkey seat for Jesus."

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com*  
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The Shave Ice Gang!



Where else could you get such a delicious plate of fried noodles (cooked by Lowell Ing) for only \$2!



## Attendance

11/4	Sunday 9:00 Eucharist	153
11/7	Wed. Healing Eucharist	29
11/11	Morning Prayer	55
11/11	Chinese Eucharist	4
11/14	Wed. Healing Eucharist	23
11/18	Sunday 9:00 Eucharist	155
11/18	Chinese Eucharist`	4
11/21	Wed. Healing Eucharist	23
11/22	Thanksgiving Day	60
11/25	Sunday 9:00 Eucharist	167
11/25	Chinese Eucharist	3

Mark your calendars for this St. E's tradition



# Neighborhood Children's Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 22  
10 am to 2 pm**

Elves of all ages are welcome! A signup sheet is on the entry table for your food donations.

## A Christmas Prayer

May there be harmony in all your relationships.  
 May sharp words, envious thoughts, and hostile feelings be dissolved.  
 May you give and receive love generously.  
 May this love echo in your heart like the church bells on a clear December day.  
 May the hope of this sacred season settle in your soul.  
 May it be a foundation of courage for you when times of distress occupy your inner land.  
 May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children be awakened within you.  
 May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation of whatever you too easily take for granted.  
 May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened as you gather with your family and friends around the table of festivity and nourishment.  
 May you daily open the gift of your life and be grateful for the hidden treasure it contains.  
 May the coming year be one of good health for you.  
 May you have energy and vitality.  
 May you care well for your body, mind, and spirit.  
 May you keep your eye on the Star within you and trust this Luminescent Presence to guide and direct you each day.  
 May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One who offers you peace.  
 May you bring this peace into our world.

—Joyce Rupp via *Gleamings*



## 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
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

Stu's Views

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I know our policy on smiting lawyers, but does it also apply to legal aid lawyers?



St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church  
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*A House of Prayer for all People*

Return service requested

A little boy was asked in Sunday school what he was going to give his sister for Christmas. "I don't know," he said. "What did you give her last year?" the teacher asked.

"Chicken pox," he replied.

### Poinsettia Donations Needed



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 16, 2012**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Number of poinsettias @ \$8.50 each \_\_\_\_\_

In memory / honor of (please circle) \_\_\_\_\_

## Christmas Services

### Christmas Eve

Dec. 24th, 9:30 pm.  
An International Christmas

Dec. 24th, 10:00 pm,  
Festival Holy Eucharist

### Christmas Day

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

*Please invite your friends to join us in the worship of the newborn King.*



### Christmas gift suggestions

For your enemies – *forgiveness*. For a friend – *your heart*. For family – *your love and caring*. For all – *charity*. For every child – *a good example*. For yourself – *respect*.

—via Rev. Sam Laswell, Redford, MI  
Joyful Noiseletter