

*"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 2013**

## **Divine Mud**

*The Reverend David J. Gierlach*

The Right Reverend  
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V Bishop of Hawaii

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Rector

The Reverend  
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Priest Associate

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In the midst of Black Friday now interrupting Thanksgiving dinner, with more and more sporting activities crowding into Sunday mornings for our young families, and a front page filled daily with all that's going wrong in the world, we thankfully are given, beginning today, the gift of Advent.

Advent is that season of the church year that takes up maybe a month or so before the celebration of Christmas.

For the next four weeks, our keiki will light Advent wreath candles and our altar and your clergy will be dressed in purple.

Purple for royalty - of Christ the King.

Purple for bruises - of Christ the King.

If we accept this gift, we can have for ourselves, alone and in community, a pause from the craziness that descends particularly in the US at this time of year.

Advent is the time to sit with the expectant mother who waits for a time not of her choosing for life to be born.

Advent is a time to repent - to change direction - to change our minds - to turn toward the face of God's welcoming smile.

Advent is a time out of time.

Last week I had the privilege of presiding at 4 burials in 5 days.

And at every burial, the question that is asked, sometimes out loud, most often though in silence, is: "What are we?"

Are we merely mud, animated for a while, only to return to the mud forever?

Are we spirit, somehow trapped in a body that, at the end of the day, is only a shell?

What are we?

The other Wednesday at the crack of dawn, my buddy Preston and I were on dish duty after the St. Peter's fried rice breakfast with the Central Middle School kids.

So I heard Preston tell me he'd been made a postulant by the bishop, which took me back because — who knew the bishop was handing out measles?

But it turns out he meant to say he'd been made a postulant for holy orders, meaning he's just taken a big step forward to becoming a deacon in this church.

So what do dishwashing deacons-to-be and clergymen talk about at 7 in the morning?

Well, we talked about those dead from last week - and we talked about those questions that come up, especially in the presence of the dead, "what are we?" - "who are we?"

Are we merely mud?

Are we spirits trapped in bodies that are not only unnecessary but that seem to attract so much pain?

And the march of time that we are all caught up in, where is it going and does it



# Rector's Message

mean something? .....does it mean anything?

These are Advent questions.

And while the pat answers are few and far between, our faith points to places where we might sit and be nourished with glimpses of what we hope are glimpses of eternal truth.

It begins with the purple.

Purple for royalty.

Purple for bruises.

What odd opposites to join together!

As you have made your way through life, have you noticed how so many folks tend to be either/or kind of people?

Whether it's democratic or republican; commie or capitalist; in or out, First Hawaiian or Bank of Hawaii, we seem so many of us to be in love with either/or.

A popular TV commercial is making the point lately when the fellow puts together his above ground swimming pool using only the bolts, but not the nuts — a good demonstration of the consequences of “either/or,” not “both/and” living — as the pool collapses and his young daughter is carried away on her inflatable rubber duckie.

Living a life of either/or can and often does have unintended consequences!

But our faith calls us to a life that is not consumed with either/or - but a life devoted to both/and.

Pope Francis is very definitely singing this tune and seems to be creating quite a stir with our Roman brothers and sisters as he breaks through the false barriers separating abortion from the death penalty, and prayer from poverty, and doctrine from the economic havoc wreaked on so many for the benefit of so few by world-wide capitalism.

It's not either/or, he's saying, it's both/and.

Which gets us back to our meditation this First Sunday of Advent.

Who are we?

What are we?

We are not merely mud.

Nor are we merely spirits trapped in otherwise useless bodies.

We are mud, yes, but we are also divine.

By the grace of God, each and every human being, made in the image and likeness of God, is a magnificent definition of what it is to be both mud and divine.

Before each human being, if we only have the eyes to see, and ears to hear, is an angel crying out: “Make way for the image of God!”

And if this is the reality of who we are, then Paul's urgent words to the Romans today are also urgent words to us today: “now [is] the moment for you to wake from sleep! Now is the time of salvation! The night is far gone, the day is near!”

And there is this.

If we are merely mud, then meaning in this life comes only from grabbing every feel good moment, no matter its cost to ourselves or the wider community.

If we are merely spirits inhabiting temporary bodies - then the need to care for these bodies, to care for each other in our physical needs, to care for the air and resources of this planet, becomes something of little importance.

After all, if becoming disembodied spirits is our final destiny, then the physical has no lasting meaning, and therefore little present importance.

But this is not the Christian faith; as much as the influences of modern consumerism, corporate profits and ancient Greek philosophy would like it to be.

Nick Kristof wrote this in his newspaper column on Thanksgiving day:

“When I've written recently about food stamp recipients, the uninsured and prison

# Rector's Message

inmates, I've had plenty of pushback from readers.

A reader named Keith reflected a chorus when he protested: 'If kids are going hungry, it is because the parents are not upholding their responsibilities.'

A reader in Washington bluntly suggested taking children from parents and putting them in orphanages.

Jim asked: 'Why should I have to subsidize someone else's child? How about personal responsibility? If you procreate, you provide.'" N. Kristof, NYT, 11/28/13, pA25.

These are the expected musings of those who see human beings as merely either mud or spirit.

But if we are divine mud, mud made divine by the grace of God; embodied spirits, spirits who exist in and only in bodies — bodies that through the resurrection will one day be transformed — but bodies still — then each of us must matter to the other — this good creation given to us by God must matter — and we know this to be true because of the day that awaits when we end our month long meditation called Advent — when Almighty God, the king of kings and lord of lords, the Alpha and the Omega, becomes divine mud; divinity fused with mud in the birth of our Savior, which is Christ the Lord.

+amen



## Senior Cross Plaque

A plaque with the names of 19 recipients of the Senior Cross from 2006 to 2012 was recently mounted on the wall behind the baptismal font. Please stop by and take a look at the names of those who were previously honored.



## Youth Car Wash

**Saturday, December 7th • 7:00 am to 2:00 pm**

Please support our Youth Group and get yourself a shiny car!



## Parish Work Day

**December 14  
9:00 am to 12:00 pm**

Let's make our church beautiful for Christmas! Many hands make light work — and a bento lunch is on the house!



## Third Annual Bizarre Bazaar

The Bazaar saw **standing room only** with a line stretching all the way to King Street as anticipation grew over the hidden treasures just waiting to be discovered! All the while, the fantabulous **Royal Hawaiian Band** played and sang much to the delight of the assembled crowds, as **Uncle Lowell Ing and Junior Warden Dave Kleinschmidt** cooked endless wok-fulls of delicious noodles, veggies and stood proudly by as **the Smokers** produced mouth watering fall off the bone spicy as can be ribs!! Meanwhile, our **ladies sewing co-op** sold a ton of Micronesian dresses and coverings, as **Uncle Dale Sato's** generously donated plant emporium was nearly sold out! Many many thanks to the **Bazaar Steering Committee** that steered this year's Bazaar, **the food folks** and **parking folks** and entertainers (did you see **Viliani Lino** in the red mop wig??!!)



Did you hear about the kava bar??? Okay, during the chugging contest who do you think won, hands down, but young **James Fitzpatrick**, who says it's the strongest stuff he ever (ever!) indulged in! All of which led to some wild and crazy dancing put on by the youth program!

*“During Advent opportunities for works of charity abound calling out for Christians from every side: a sack of food for a needy family, money dropped in a Salvation Army kettle, a toy for ‘Toys-for-Tots.’ Unfortunately, these works of charity so easily can assuage the Christian conscience, while doing nothing to bringing about a solution to the root causes of the problem. Works of justice, on the other hand, follow the road less traveled of Advent’s hope to pursue solutions for difficult problems. Hope comes through works of justice rather than simply performing works of charity.”*



## **VIRUS WARNING**

**Some signs and symptoms of**

### **The Advent Virus:**

- **A tendency to think and act spontaneously rather than on fears based on past experiences.**
- **An unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment.**
- **A loss of interest in judging other people.**
- **A loss of interest in interpreting the actions of others.**
- **A loss of interest in conflict.**
- **A loss of the ability to worry. (This is a very serious symptom.)**
- **Frequent, overwhelming episodes of appreciation.**
- **Contented feelings of connectedness with others and nature.**
- **Frequent attacks of smiling.**
- **An increasing tendency to let things happen rather than make them happen.**
- **An increased susceptibility to the love extended by others as well as the uncontrollable urge to extend it.**



The wild and crazy youth league cuts a rug (or asphalt as the case may be....)



Heather Manning’s wonderful halau made a splash with those swaying hips and graceful hula hands!

-Unknown

# Sunday School News

Advent is upon us and the children are very excited! The first Sunday in Advent we launched our arks — while studying the story of Noah and the Ark, we did have rain! **Tea Gierlach** read the scripture and the children built their arks. The second week of Advent, you will see the animals of Kenya and faces of the children of ICODEI during the offertory as the arks and all monies collected will be going to the beautiful people in Kenya involved with ICODEI. The Sunday School children would like to share your gifts of loose change...to change the world two by two, support sustainable farming, orphanages with HIV-infected women and children, and feed families for a lifetime.

During Advent the children will be collecting your loose change and giving the gift of hope to the people of ICODEI. Loose change changes lives — please be generous.

Each Sunday in Advent the children will take part in the service. They will all be in the processional, gather at the Advent wreath, two readers will read the Advent prayer and then light each Advent candle. On Christmas Day, all 4 purple candles will be lit with the white candle representing Christ. This first week in Advent we had 35 children watch as the Advent wreath was lit.



Reminder for the children and their neighborhood friends: The Annual Christmas Party will be on Saturday, December 21st from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. The children do come hungry!

Sunday School will be on recess on December 29th and will resume on January 5th, 2014.

Blessed Advent to all of you!



## Attendance

11/3	Sunday	199
11/6	Wednesday	29
11/10	Sunday	160
11/13	Wednesday	27
11/17	Sunday	203
11/20	Wednesday	21
11/24	Sunday	161
11/27	Wednesday	21
11/28	Thanksgiving Day	72



*“Take time to be aware that in the very midst of our busy preparations for the celebration of Christ’s birth in ancient Bethlehem, Christ is reborn in the Bethlehems of our homes and daily lives. Take time, slow down, be still, be awake to the Divine Mystery that looks so common and so ordinary yet is wondrously present.”*

Mark your calendars for this St. E's tradition



# Neighborhood Children's Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 21  
10 am to 2 pm**

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



## 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
Laureen 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

Episcopal Diocese of Hawaii  
Pacific Islander Ministry would like  
to invite you to come

# Celebrate Christmas *The Voice of the Pacific*

Monday, December 23  
6:00p.m to 8:00p.m

720 North King Street  
Honolulu HI 96817  
Covered parking is available.

Inquiries contact: Fane 'Umukisia Lino  
(808) 548-1719  
fanelino@gmail.com

**For over 100 years, members  
have remembered**

**St. E's in their wills.**

**Please do the same so our  
ministry can continue  
for another 100 years.**





# Aloha to James Fitzpatrick

This will be the last article I write for St. Elizabeth's Vine and Branches as Youth Outreach Manager. I would like to thank everyone who has supported the work that I have done with the youth of our community,

and ask that you continue to support this important work now that **Viliani Lino** has taken over the position.

I am moving to a full time position as a community organizer with FACE (Faith Action for Community Equity), the community organizing organization that St. Elizabeth's is a member of. My new job will require me to sometimes attend other churches, but St. Elizabeth's will still remain my home church and I will attend services when I am able.

This month is Viliani's first big project, the annual Christmas Party on December 21st. Everyone is welcome to come and join in the games, eat food, and share in fellowship. Please see Viliani for details on volunteering and what supplies are needed for donation. Again, thank you for your support in my time as St. Elizabeth's Youth Outreach Manager. Be assured that I will continue as a member of the Parish and that you will be seeing me.

## 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 15, 2013**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## CCA Meeting!!!!

The **Chinese Christian Association (CCA) Annual Meeting** will take place at First Chinese Church of Christ on December 14 at 11 am. The church is located at 1054 South King Street.

## Christmas Services

### Christmas Eve

Dec. 24th, 9:30 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

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



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