

"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

February 2016 **Of Primates and Prophets**

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V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend
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Rector

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Priest Associate

The Reverend Dr.
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The Rev. David J. Gierlach, rector

Perhaps you heard about the recent gathering in London by the world's Anglican primates — they are the presiding bishops from each country or region of the world that belongs to the Anglican communion.

Perhaps you heard that the Episcopal Church got sent to the corner, slapped on the knuckles with a ruler, and sent to bed without dinner because after a 40 year long conversation, we decided that it isn't our job to say to committed persons in same sex unions, or to gay, lesbian, transgendered or bi-sexual people, that you just don't measure up.

And I must say, when the news of our discipline leaked out, the question that popped into my head is this:

How on earth did Christianity evolve from a profoundly destabilizing, radical, turn the world's values on its head concern for the poor and needy and dispossessed — into an embarrassing preoccupation with the private sexual behavior of consenting adults?

Silly me, I've always thought that Jesus, the face of the living God, ought to be the source of what is important and what is not.

And when we take a walk with Jesus, what we find out in a hurry is that the private sexual lives of grown-ups doesn't seem to interest him very much at all.

He eats with prostitutes and shames those about to stone a woman caught in the very act of having her pants down in her neighbor's bedroom.

About the closest he comes to condemning anything (aside from self-righteousness and hypocrisy) is when he condemns the heartbreak

of divorce, and yet nearly all the drum beaters condemning the LGBT community are either divorced themselves or live in communities where the sad fact of divorce is accepted as just another example of human failure — which in no way separates us from the love of God or inclusion in the full life of the church.

So it is no small irony that today's lessons say what they say.

It starts with Nehemiah and the prophet Ezra who have all the people lined up to hear the law — and they are all crying!

Why?

Because they know what the writer of the psalms knows:

"...there is no godly one left, the faithful have vanished." *Ps 12:1*

And: "everyone has proved faithless; all alike have turned bad, and there is no one who does good, no, not one." *Ps. 14:2*

No wonder the people are in tears.

These good, faithful, people know deep in their bones that, left to their own devices, they, like us, face certain doom.

But God's mercy says you are not alone; and God will do for you what you cannot do for yourselves.

"Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions ... to those for whom nothing is prepared, ..., and do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." *Neh. 8:10.*

And then there's Paul reminding the Corinthians that everyone has a place in the body of Christ, just like every body part, even



Rector's Message, continued

the most despised, even the most embarrassing, is a necessary part of our own body.

When Paul announces that there is no longer Jew or Greek, male or female, slave or free, he is recognizing the astounding fact that before God, we are all of us simply human beings; that the divisions we create aren't from God, and that walls, rather than being built up, need to be torn down: including walls that forbid same sex committed couples from marrying, including walls that seek to keep out of this rich nation immigrants who are hungry.

All of which Jesus picks up on when he announces the purpose of his ministry.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me....!"

He's just back from 40 days in the desert.

40 days of being tempted to do things OUR way: like turning rocks into bread; grabbing for the brass ring of fame; pursuing power at all costs.

The Spirit that enables Jesus to say NO to all of that is the same Spirit that says to we who claim to follow Jesus: get ready for a ride; because my ways, says the Lord, are not your ways!

And immediately Jesus proves the point by announcing good news — not for the best and the brightest — but for the poor, including those without money or land,but also including the outcasts, the queer, the weird and the ones society calls misfits.

He offers sight to the blind: which includes not so much those who need a seeing eye dog, but those who are blinded by culture and tradition from seeing that the outcasts and the queer and the weird and the misfits are indeed our brothers and sisters, precious family members, the beloved children of God....

One of the honest points made by our Anglican Primates in London last week was when they acknowledged that the dust up over LGBT relationships has more to do with culture than with scripture.

The African bishops come from a culture that is deeply hostile to LGBT relationships, but so was our own culture just a generation ago.

And for all the beauty that our various human cultures bring, as Christians, every culture needs transforming in the light of the gospel's call to love, to forgive, to accept and to embrace — especially the stranger, the enemy, the oddball.

Truth be told, "this good news is only good if you are willing to admit what is hard in your life, what is lacking, what has been most difficult, because it's not "good news" in general that Jesus announces, it is good news for the poor.

It is not just release, but release to those who are captive, sight to those who are blind, freedom to those who are oppressed." David Lose.

Strange as it seems, it's good news for those, individually and collectively, who have looked in the mirror and see the need to change

staring back at them: for those who have taken a deep breath and confronted the pain of childhood abuse or abandonment; to those who have looked deeply at the narrowness and exclusivity of our own particular cultures; and admit that I, we, are sinners too.

Coming to grips with who we are is what changes what seems to be bad news into very good news indeed.

Which is why this grand experiment here at St E's is so wonderful.

Historically, the Episcopal parishes in Hawaii, like churches all over the place, were segregated by race or ethnic background.

Even today, most of our parishes are primarily made up of a single ethnic group, where it's easy to replace the radical call of the gospel with the comfortable routine of a particular culture.

But not here.

Here, in our diversity, we can learn from each other, and challenge each other, and seek all together to live lives more deeply rooted in the culture of the gospel while still appreciating the goodness that each of our various cultures brings.

And maybe, just maybe, if we keep doing just that, we might find ourselves in the year of the Lord's favor.

Which is any year when kindness trumps revenge.

The year of the Lord's favor is any year human walls are replaced with bridges.

The year of the Lord's favor happens any year an enemy is forgiven, a grudge forgotten, when fear is consumed by hope.

We Anglicans live under a broad tent.

We pride ourselves on taking the best of the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions, and because of that, I am hopeful that the current tears in our communion will be healed, restored and repaired.

Until that day comes, let us continue to walk with one another, understanding that when we fall, it is God who lifts us up — this faithful God who desires nothing more from us than that we love mercy, act kindly, and walk humbly with our God.

+amen

Lenten Season



The season of Lent has its kickoff with St. E's world famous Shrove Tuesday, February 9 starting with an Evening Prayer at 6 pm and followed by deeeeeelicious sweets of every kind for dinner.

All to get us ready for our own 40 days in the desert, 40 days to reflect on our faith and to explore ways to more deeply touch the ever present Kingdom of God that wanders everywhere among us.

Ash Wednesday will see **Fr. David** and **Mother Imelda** back in Chinatown with Ashes to Go! Our small effort to bring the church to folks who can't make it to the church. Each year for the last few years we have imposed ashes on up to 100 people right smack dab in the middle of the vegetable market!



And we plan to begin a foot washing ministry that targets the houseless, keeping in mind that folks living on the street tend to never be touched by a human being, and yet, as human beings, we all need the touch of another. Our pal **Bob Kane**, teacher at Iolani, will lead this charge..... We will kick it off during the Saturday morning Loaves and Fishes Breakfasts since many of our houseless friends are already here. We hope to have even a podiatrist around some days to help folks with foot ailments. Washing each other's feet is the final lesson our Lord left to us and the final command he gave to us: **"As I have done for you, do for one another."**

The Ash Wednesday Mass will be at Noon and at 6:00 PM here at St. Elizabeth's with ashes and Holy Communion.



Happy Birthday, Malia!

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 30 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



Kung Hee Fat Choi!!!!

The Chinese New Year will be celebrated on Sunday February 7 right after Mass with our wonderful Lion Dancers, totally illegal fireworks and a delightful brunch all to ring in the Year of the Monkey!

PLEASE BE SURE TO COME EARLY AND STAY LATE FOR THIS ALWAYS FUN CELEBRATION!



Monkey is the ninth in the 12-year cycle of Chinese zodiac. The Years of the Monkey include 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004, 2016, 2028...

The monkey is a clever animal. It is usually compared to a smart person. During the Spring and Autumn Period (770 - 476 BC), the dignified Chinese official title of marquis was pronounced 'Hou', the same as the pronunciation of 'monkey' in Chinese. The animal was thereby bestowed with an auspicious meaning.

Baby Malia, granddaughter of **Deacon Langi** and wife **Anapesi**, celebrated her 1st Birthday under the tent here at St Elizabeth's.

The Coalition For Specialized Housing may help us obtain a container home that contains a shower, kitchenette, fridge and more for a houseless person or two to reside in.....more news as it comes in!!



FAKE IT TILL YOU MAKE IT!

"In 'The Happy Hypocrite' Max Beerbohm tells about a regency rake named Lord George Hell, debauched and profligate, who falls in love with a saintly girl, and, in order to win her love covers his bloated features with the mask of a saint.

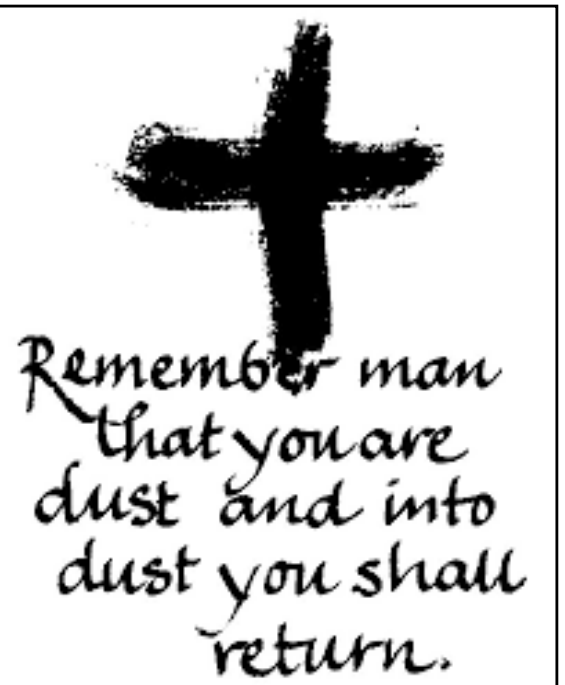
The girl is deceived and becomes his bride, and they live together happily until a wicked lady from Lord George Hell's wicked past turns up to expose him for the scoundrel she knows him to be and challenges him to take off his mask.

So sadly, having no choice, he takes it off, and lo and behold beneath the saint's mask is the face of the saint he has become by wearing it in love.

-F. Buechner, *Telling the Truth*, 81.



"Basically, we're looking for an innovative pastor with a fresh vision who will inspire our church to remain exactly the same."



Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

On February 9th the children will be hosting the **Annual Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper!** Pancakes? Supper? Please join us at 6:00 pm for evening prayer in the church, immediately followed by the flippin', fluffy, ono pancakes and even more scrumptious, **Doug Ing's** infamous French Toast all happening in Shim Hall! You're all invited, any dish you share will be devoured! But it's pancakes, pancakes, pancakes... and French toast... on the menu!!!

So why pancakes? This goes back 1000 years and counting... Shrove Tuesday is the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday which is the first day of Lent. It's a day of penitence, to clean the soul, and a day of celebration as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. The pancakes themselves are part of an ancient custom with deeply religious roots.

Lent is a time of abstinence, of giving things up. So Shrove Tuesday is the last chance to indulge yourself, and to use up the foods that aren't allowed in Lent. Giving up foods: but not wasting them. In the old days there were many foods that observant Christians would not eat during Lent: foods such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods. So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast on the shricing Tuesday, and eat up all the foods that wouldn't last the forty days of Lent without going off. . The fattening ingredients that most people had in their houses in those days were eggs and milk. A very simple recipe to use up these ingredients was to combine them with some flour and make pancakes!

During Lent the children will participate in the Sunday services with the opening prayer and readings then extinguishing the candles on the Lenten wreath counting down to the 6 weeks to Easter Sunday.



*St Elizabeth's will be blessed with **Mother Nicole's** religion class who are here to volunteer tutoring, serving hot breakfasts, working the garden and more! Thanks to these future leaders for treading where many are afraid to go!*



FEBRUARY 9 **PANCAKE SUPPER** **SHROVE TUESDAY**

6:00 PM – Evening Prayer in Church
Gather in Shim Hall immediately following the service.

Pancakes, French Toast and more –

Please share a delectable dish – meat, fruit, vegetable or dessert!

¡Hola de Panamá!

By James Fitzpatrick

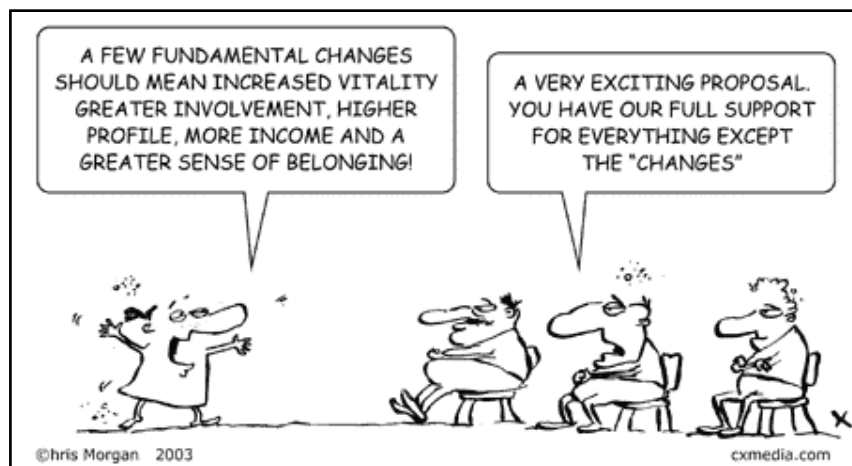
Greetings from Panama! I am happy to let everyone know that all is well over here. I wanted to update everyone about what I have been doing while here. I have been volunteering at an HIV/AIDS clinic as well as a malnourished children's clinic. The main part of my job is working with kids in the community and trying to develop a youth program at La Transfiguración in Changuinola. Changuinola is the town that I am living in. It is in the northern part of Panama in a region known as Bocas del Toro.



The week of January 11-15 was a very important week for the youth program because we hosted a Vacation Bible School. The theme of the week was "Finding God in the world around us." Between three teachers, Eunice Vassell (Senior Warden at La Transfiguración), Blacxenia Ashley (a local school teacher) and myself, we hosted around 15 to 20 kids each day. We worked on art projects, sang songs, held discussions, and worked with daily themes to help us understand our overall theme of the week. The children ranged in age from around 8 to 15 years old. The part I liked best was singing the songs. While many of you may remember that I am a horrible singer, it did remind me of singing with the youth at St. Elizabeth's. There are certain songs that everyone knows how to

sing, and particularly at La Transfiguración "Marcharemos en la luz de Dios," ("We are Marching in the Light of God") is an important song. We practiced that song with the children all week.

Since the children of the community are largely not a part of the Episcopal Church, we invited them to present what they had learned during the week to the congregation on Sunday January 17. We also invited their parents and families to come and hear what they had learned about and to watch them sing. On Sunday during the service we had the children present some of the art that they created, and talk about the specific days and what they did. To finish the presentation we had them sing "Marcharemos." After the service everyone gathered in the parish hall for food. While there the children also put on a skit that they had prepared while everyone was eating. Overall it was a very good week, and it ended well. Hopefully we can keep the same energy going as we try to grow and form a youth program at La Transfiguración. I hope all is well with St. Elizabeth's and ask that you continue to keep me in your prayers as my journey in Panama continues.



ST. JOHN'S HAD TRIED SHOCK TACTICS, PATHOS AND GUILT - BUT IT WAS IRONY THAT FINALLY PULLED IN THE CROWDS



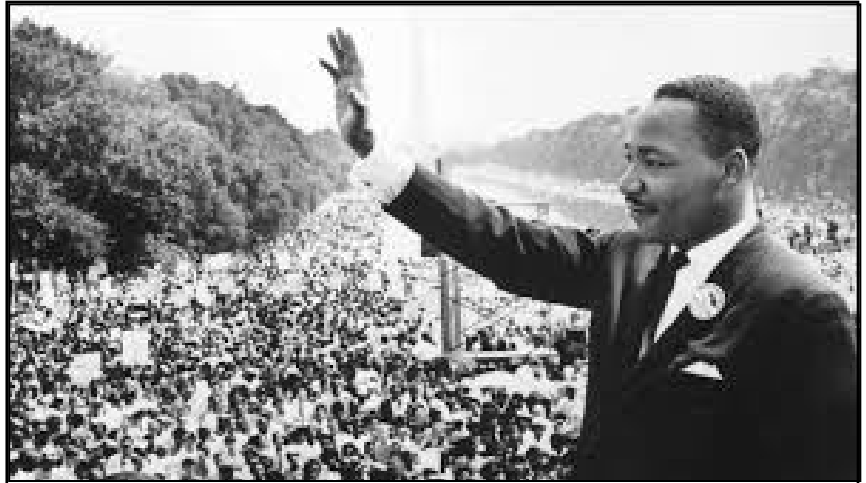
Happy Birthday

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

Elsie Okubo	2/01
Myra Okimoto	
Zachary Okimoto	2/02
Andrea Sagucio	2/04
Inasia Thomas	2/07
Shiloh Ramelb	2/08
Alicia Ho Nakata	2/11
Doris Lam	
David Kaloi	2/12
Beatriz Timonio	2/15
Elyson Badua	2/16
Edward Fitzpatrick	2/17
Harlan Arakawa	
Sue Jean Chun	2/21
Faye Tsukamoto	2/24
Tulenkun Jr.	2/25
Kazner Alexander	2/26
Ashton Ballesteros	
Herold Unarce	
Ethan Anderson	2/27
Lilia Timonio	2/28

Attendance

Sunday, Jan 3, Eucharists & Vespers	236
Wednesday, Jan 6, Eucharist & Vespers	51
Sunday, Jan 10, Eucharists & Vespers	216
Wednesday, Jan 13, Eucharist	20
Sunday, Jan 17, Eucharists & Vespers	221
Wednesday, Jan 20, Eucharist	17
Sunday, Jan 24, Eucharists & Vespers	222
Wednesday, Jan 27, Eucharist	12
Sunday, Jan 31, Eucharists & Vespers	197



*Now that he is safely dead, let us praise him
Build monuments to his glory
Sing hosannas to his name.
Dead men make such convenient heroes.
They cannot rise to challenge the images
we would fashion from their lives.
And besides, it is easier to build
monuments than to make a better world.
So, now that he is safely dead,
We, with eased consciences,
Will teach our children that he was a great man,
knowing that the cause for which he died
Is still a dream,
A dead man's dream.*

-Carl Wendell Hines Jr.

