

"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

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Why Baptism?

The Rev. David J. Gierlach, rector

Well last week we had the great joy of baptizing young Tate, after he worried for 7 years that I would literally drown him in the font.

And today we celebrate the baptism of our Lord, with old John the Baptist dunking folks into the Jordan River, drowning them away from one kind of life and lifting them up to a new.

And in between all of this, we have both the prophet Isaiah and the Psalmist recalling the miracle of the Exodus, when God indeed drowns the slave masters as he liberates a bunch of nobodies — so that they may become God's somebodies.

It is this connection between Exodus and Baptism that helps us to see exactly who we are and exactly who we are called to become.

So many folks think of baptism as just another kind of initiation ceremony, like learning the secret Mason handshake or unlocking the mysteries of the Rotary Club's decoder ring.

But in fact, baptism is our "yes" to God's freedom movement, to our own, individual and collective, liberation.

Baptism is our stepping into a life in which God is on the move, which is why in our reading from Acts today, it takes the baptism in the name of the Spirit to really get things going, because the Spirit is God on the move.

Baptism takes us from our narrow, self-centered pre-occupation with what we say is good and evil and takes us to places where we can witness the majesty of what God calls good and evil.

Before baptism, good and evil means what's good or bad for me and my own.

After baptism, good and evil means what's good and bad for the other: for the neighbor, for the stranger.

We begin to see that the majesty of God alights on the poor, the oppressed, and the slave.

And so Exodus comes alive again and again through the miracle that is baptism.

Exodus comes alive in the civil rights movement that we celebrate this month.

Do you remember that Easter Sunday back in 1964 when 5000 people wearing their Sunday best marched from the church to the jail cell that held the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.?

"The marchers set off in a festive mood when suddenly they saw the police, fire trucks and firemen holding fire hoses blocking their path.

Bull Connor, the notorious police chief of Birmingham, Alabama, bellowed: 'Turn these people around!'

Andrew Young recalls it this way:

Wyatt Walker and I were leading the march.

I can't say we knew what to do.

I know I didn't want to turn the march around.....

I asked the people to get down on their knees and pray....

Suddenly, another minister jumps up and hollers 'The Lord is with this movement!'

Off your knees!

We're going on!

A stunned Bull Connor yells that they be stopped, but none of the police move a muscle.

Even the dogs that had been growling and straining at their leashes stand perfectly still....

I see one fireman, tears in his eyes, the hose just drops to his feet.



Rector's Message, continued

Our people walk right through those red fire trucks, singing 'I Want Jesus To Walk With Me.'

The police refuse to arrest us, the firemen refuse to hose us, the dogs refuse to bite us....

I'll never forget the old woman shouting out as we march through the barricades:

'Great God almighty done parted the Red Sea one more time!' Andrew Young, *An Easy Burden*, 223.

The transforming power of God through Exodus and baptism is again alive at Dr. King's 1963 speech at the Washington Monument, where, to Mrs King, "it seemed that the words Martin spoke came from some higher place — a gift given to the weary people before him.

Yes, heaven itself opened up that day and we were all transformed." P. Lehman, *The Transfiguration of Politics*, 182-3.

It happened in East Timor when the Indonesian government brutally suppressed the people of that tiny island in the late 1990's; when a reporter listens in "at the broken heart of a small city, while a priest tries to persuade his threadbare listeners that suffering is rewarded, and that there is such a thing, even for them, as resurrection.

"You are like the people of Israel who suffered for peace, suffered for freedom, suffered so that they could have their own land." S. Mydens, *New York Times*, 10/4/99.

It's happening here, today, in what Nella Kleinschmidt calls the Little Engine That Could, thinking about this our parish and the small but important work we are all of us doing in this community.

In baptism we are all invited to become part of the Exodus story.

In baptism, we are allowed to move from the petty and the selfish and the stupid into a way of living that seeks the best for each other, that is rigorous in self-examination, that is utterly confident that what we cannot do for ourselves, God can do for us.

But to get there, some dying needs to be done.

A bishop gives a baptism class in the Deep South.

He reads from Paul's letter to the Romans:

"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

We were buried with him by baptism into death.

Our old self was crucified, we have died with Christ." *Rom. 6*

The bishop is greeted with blank stares.

Desperately, he asks: "Has anyone here died to become a Christian?"

I know we didn't pour enough water on you to kill you when you were baptized, but did any of you have to die?"

A timid hand comes up, and the white man says:

"When the schools in Jackson were integrated, I thought I would die.

I knew enough to know that on the day black children went to school with our children, the world I knew was dead.

But now, my black neighbor is my best friend.

An old world dies, but a new world is born." Willimon, *Peculiar Speech*, 14.

And then there is the woman who was terrified of sleeping alone in her home when her husband went on business trips.

If he left, she always took the kids to a friend's house to spend the night, so deep was her fear and anxiety.

And then her daughter died of leukemia, and she never again was afraid to be home alone; and when someone asked why, she replied:

"Well, when you've died, what else is there to fear?

When you've had to let go of your most precious possession, what else could happen that would be worse?" Id. at 15.

And finally there is 12 year old Sven, home alone doing farm chores one cold, snowy day.

Working in the barn, he hears the wind grow loud, and then, horrified, sees the family home on fire.

Running from the barn to the house, a blizzard in full swing; he is disoriented, and lost in the swirl of white.

He knows he will die.

In his panic, he runs face first into the side of the barn, breaking his nose.

He awakes hours later, tucked under the family cow, face bloody, holding his busted nose.

As an adult, "Sven never forgot his confrontation with death."

"Having lost his life, he entered a new one with a sweet disposition.

He planted trees, raised cattle, married, had seven children, and seldom spoke a harsh word.

His nose was never set.

He pitched ten tons of hay on the day he was married; in their wedding picture he sits,

Rector's Message, continued

smiling, his eyes bright behind his ruined beak, a man who took a hard wallop and now everything is easy for him." Keillor, *Lake Wobegon Days*, 208.

And perhaps that is the heart of baptism.

While we often speak of our faith as a slow growing process; it is just as often a hard smack: some kind a loss or injury or death; that really gets the whole journey on its way.

In ways I will never understand, it seems we need this kind of crisis, because without the crisis, we just don't develop the eyes to see the new world that God invites us into.

Without a broken beak, or a broken heart, we tend to see only what is in front of our straight noses: things like jobs and family obligations and wounded feelings and common sense.

It is the hard smack of death, that comes in so many different ways, that helps us enter a world where kindness reigns, where forgiveness is the path to peace, where violence is rejected, where friendship is the norm.

It takes the death of the world we know to find ourselves in God's new world.

Baptism is the gateway into this new world; a world that God creates; the world intended for each of us since the beginning of time: it is our Exodus from the old life to the new.

In baptism, we are each of us called by name and made a child of God.

But we are, at baptism, also called to become a people of God, and it is in that journey, that transformation, from a child of God to the people of God, that the fire of Jesus saves us.

You heard it from John this morning: "The one who comes after me will baptize not with water, but with fire, and the Holy Spirit.

We often forget this part of baptism's power: the power of fire.

The fire that Jesus brings is the fire that burns the chaff in our lives.

The "me first" chaff – the "us vs. them" chaff; the chaff that causes us to be anxious and afraid; and as that chaff burns, we begin to discover that despite all appearances, service and humility are the path to real peace; and surrendering what I want in favor of what others need is the key to God's Kingdom.

This is our Exodus.

This is our baptism.

+amen



Shamelessly stolen from Ed Gerlock's 2015 Christmas card



Happy Birthday

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

Lynette Shim	01/01
Enriqueta Haller	
Akimasa Eis	
Awaeliery Ferata	01/02
Grand Olobwy	01/03
Leo John Pangelina	01/05
Serenity Michael	01/06
Vernon Anaya	01/07
Kama Wong	01/08
Nella Kleinschmidt	01/09
Rebecca Kleinschmidt	01/10
Charles Steffey Jr.	01/11
Genevieve Hayakawa	
Harry Kurosu	01/12
Charlotte Jarrett	01/13
Tray Esaki	01/14
Soo Kil Park	
Sylvia Rowland	
Tarla Francis	01/16
Dawn Yadao	
Shaienne Sunagawa	01/18
Elyas Badua	
Sharlene Yap	01/19
CharleySue Steffey	
Janet Leong	01/20
Bonnie Lu	
Melba Meyshine	
Rachel Marlow	01/21
Jack Simpson	01/23
Mark Anderson	01/25
Imensy Eichy	01/27
Kermelo Cadee White	01/28
Susan Kau	01/29
Allison Marlow	01/31

Within Our Community

Project VISION is a mobile screening unit that provides free vision screenings and advocates for the early detection of eye diseases and disorders. The 35-foot RV is equipped with state-of-the-art digital imaging equipment that takes high-quality photos of the inside of the eye in less than 10 minutes. Using the photos, ophthalmologists who review the images can detect eye conditions like diabetic retinopathy, macular degeneration, glaucoma and cataracts.



In addition to helping sign folks up for Obamacare medical coverage, we hosted this eye truck so folks can get their eyeballs looked at by preprofessionals!

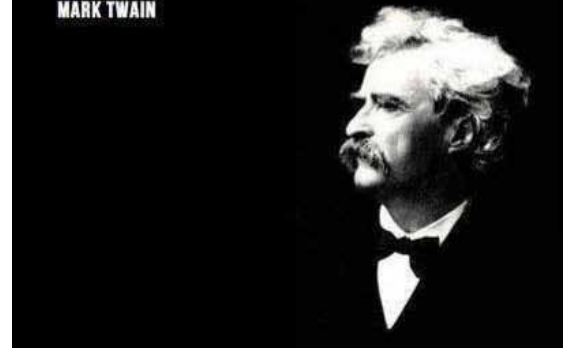
The Hawai'i Foodbank is the only nonprofit 501(c)3 agency in the state of Hawaii that collects, warehouses and distributes mass quantities of both perishable and non-perishable food to 200 member agencies as well as food banks on the Big Island, Maui and Kauai.



The Hawaii Foodbank forms a vital link between the food donors and our member agencies by providing services in collecting, sorting, salvaging and distributing food. The Hawaii Foodbank also supports its member agencies through financial and educational assistance.

Sometimes I wonder whether the world is being run by smart people who are putting us on, or by imbeciles who really mean it.

MARK TWAIN



Kaiser High School's Gay-Straight Alliance showed up on a Saturday morning to pitch in for our breakfast for the houseless, Loaves and Fishes!

Thanks gang!!!!



Harlan Arakawa and **Fr. David** were on KHON talking about the Food Bank and encouraging local businesses to support this vital agency!



Youth Christmas Party Extravaganza

By William Lino

Well, there are parties and then there are PAAAARRTIES!!! Our Youth Christmas Party on Dec. 23rd was a success! And it wouldn't have been accomplished without the help of the congregation. Special Thanks to **Caren, Elaine, Nancy, Heather,** and the **Chock** Family for wrapping all the presents in a jiffy, and a huge mahalo to **Pacific Island Ministries,** who helped pitch in for the cotton candy machine and the Dunk Tank. The youth also were helpful elves as they helped run the party. We had them working on the Cotton candy Machine, the Dunk Tank, and run some of the activities, voluntarily ofcourse.

We had 25 children that were on the Nice list, ages ranging from 1-15 and they all received gifts from yours truly. The joy on their faces lit the whole room as they danced through the hall with their presents. Santa Claus' hands were a little tied up at that moment. He would have been proud of me, but we all know that Jesus was the Reason for the Season!



Lillian and Mother Imelda man 500 Costco pizzas! Or, at least it felt like it!



Mahalo to **Pacific Island Ministries** who chipped in for the cotton candy machine and dunk tank!



Tell Santa the truth, **Nathan**, were you really a good boy this year?



Where do these gorgeous kids come from?!

Happy New Year to all! The students were very busy during Advent 2015 collecting money for the awesome people in **Icodei, Kenya**, singing the offertory hymn in animal masks with **uncle Ned Murphy** on the banjo - The Unicorn Song! Thanks to all of you for your generous support! The children collected a whopping **\$791!** That should buy a chicken or two!?! The Arks with your generous donations will reach Icodei during Epiphany, sent with our blessings and prayers!

Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are always special! On Christmas Eve, there was a multi-congregational celebration in song and prayers. On Christmas Day, the creche was blessed! The children watched as the baby Jesus was placed in the creche and prayers offered. During the Offertory, the children and youth, accompanied by song birds who wanted to sing all lifted their voices to sing 'Joy To The World' with uncle **Ned Murphy** on the banjo and **Miss Ajaon** on piano!

The children had a Christmas party in the classroom on the 1st Sunday after Christmas - hot dogs and treated to the delicious home-baked cookies of **Doug Ing!** Mrs. **Doris Lam** had a puppet show for the children re-enacting the Christmas story with her hand-made puppets.

Beginning in Epiphany, **Seine Lino** will join the teachers in classroom A. **Aunty Fane** and **Villiami** will continue to teach the high school Youth in Shim Hall. Music lessons also continue the 4th Sunday of each month with **Miss Ajaon**.

Watch for more information on **Shrove Tuesday, February 9th!** Pancakes, Pancakes and more pancakes... maybe even a french toast? Save the evening!

Sweet, Sweet Music



Melodious voices filled the air Christmas Eve as the service began with carols and lessons, with stellar music from our bell, Tongan, Chuukese and youth choirs....with the youth even putting on a nativity play that was simply amazing what with a zillion moving parts and terrific choreography (you know, dancing...)! Only to be followed on Christmas Day with the Sunday school gang, accompanied by **Uncle Ned** and the banjo, singing Joy to the World! They sang so beautifully that actual angels stopped by to listen!

Pictured to the left : The "animals" singing the Unicorn Song on the 4th Sunday in Advent..

*Below: **Uncle Ned** joins the children for Joy to the World on Christmas Day*



Congratulations, Tate!



On Sunday, January 3rd, **Tate Keali'ikuwaponimakahikiloa Zhong Hao Anderson** was baptized! Born on October 26, 2009, he is the son of **Caroline** and **Mark Anderson**. His Godparents are **Sharlene Yap Starkman** and **Michael Yap**. God bless you, **Tate**, and congratulations!




Yes, this is Tate who worried for 7 years that baptism meant being literally drowned. Now he knows that baptism means starting a new life with the upside-down God who makes all things new! And maybe he will discover that, after all is said and done, it's not God that is upside-down, it's us!

Attendance

Wednesday, Dec 2, Eucharists	33
Sunday, Dec 6, Eucharists & Vespers	212
Wednesday, Dec 9, Eucharist	21
Sunday, Dec 13, Eucharists & Vespers	226
Wednesday, Dec 16, Eucharist	17
Sunday, Dec 20, Eucharists & Vespers	228
Thursday, Dec 24, Christmas Eve	160
Friday, Dec 25, Christmas	125
Sunday, Dec 27, Eucharist & Vespers	189



January 18, 2016 marks the celebration of the life of a modern saint. In these days when fear of the stranger provides cheap political theater, let us remember our better selves and rededicate our lives to building up the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom that welcomes everyone, especially the least, the lost and the alien.



✱ Life's most persistent and urgent question is, **what are you doing for others?**

Exposure Helping Those in Need

So there we were, minding our own business, when the call comes on the cell phone. “This is so and so with the CBS Evening News and thus and so said to call you to talk about the housing crisis in Hawaii.” Before you can say “wow!” there’s former White House correspondent **Chip Reid** standing in the aisle of our church with cameras rolling and a chance to say something to the nation. And the producer? Why that’s **Jeff Goldman** to the right, walking the pet chicken that belongs to the grandson of the family living in the van! Thanks CBS!!



CBS producer Jeff Goldman got chicken walking duty while correspondent Chip Reid interviewed our family living in their van!



Pictured above (with their permission) are a few of the folks who really need the assistance of the *Laundry Aloha* program that can only continue into 2016 with YOUR help. The first Thursday of each month sees 50 bags containing a \$10 roll of quarters, 2 extra large capacity laundry tabs and some info on St E’s to folks living on the edge. All 50 were gone within the first 30 minutes!! Check out www.stelizabeth720.org and look for the **DONATE NOW** button. Know that what you give is making a big difference in the lives of many!



Check out the story here! <http://www.cbsnews.com/live/video/a-close-look-at-hawaiis-homeless-crisis/>

