

"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

March 2016

The Right Reverend
Robert L. Fitzpatrick
V Bishop of Hawaii

The Reverend
David J. Gierlach
Rector

The Reverend
Imelda S. Padasdao,
Priest Associate

The Reverend Dr.
Gerald G. Gifford.
Rector Emeritus

The Reverend Peter S. M. Fan,
Cantonese Language Priest

Hsiao Ying "Ajaan" Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

Karyn Castro
Parish Administrator
Editor and Layout
Music Consultant

Caren Esaki
Senior Warden

Mosese Langi,
Junior Warden

Donovan Young, Secretary

Mary Ann Lentz
Treasurer

Website:
www.stelizabeth720.org

Email:
stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com

Who's To Blame?

The Rev. David J. Gierlach, rector

The week started with a visit to a small, cold, back room at the mortuary.

There, on a table, covered with a blanket, lay the remains of Bianca.

A graduate of Boston University, she spoke three languages and earned a living as a model — her mom and dad and her only friend were there as we prayed before her body was sent into the fire for cremation.

Dead of an infection, brought on by alcoholism, at the age of 34.

Who's to blame?

Pilate has his guards slaughter men from Galilee who are at the temple offering their sacrifice...so their blood mixes with the blood of the lambs.

Is the evil the Romans fault?

Is something wrong with the men who are offering their sacrifice that such a horror should happen in the midst of religious worship?

Who's to blame?

In Lisbon, Portugal, on All Saints Day in the year 1755, a massive earthquake struck killing as many as 100 thousand people, including thousands who were at prayer in churches all around the city that day.

Who's to blame?

And last Wednesday, Franklin Graham, the son of world famous evangelist Billy Graham was in town, encouraging the hundreds who showed up to elect Bible believing evangelical Christians to every level of government in the name of almighty God,

because, he went on to say, this nation is collapsing into moral chaos.

Who's to blame?

It always amazes me how our weekly readings go right to the heart of our every day life.

People then and people now are dying to have clear answers to life's mysteries.

Whether that mystery is when and how the world will end or whether it is the mystery of human evil, like Pilate's attack on the Galilean worshippers, or right wing evangelicals co-opting the word of God to fit a narrow, nationalistic, white-power form of civil religion – we gather around and ask: "why?" "why?" "why?"

The crowds are chanting that question at Jesus today, but Jesus isn't biting.

When Isa was diagnosed with terminal colon cancer, our friend and priest, Fr. Charlie Hopkins, brought her a book entitled: "How to Live and Die Gracefully."

Isa threw the book at Charlie so hard it nearly took his head off.

A few years ago, Fr. Charlie was dying from lung disease.

One of his sons brought him a book entitled: "Why Do Bad Things Happen to Good People?"

Charlie threw that book so hard at his son that it nearly took his head off!

When you're in that situation, what you know to be true is that there's no book, no words of advice, no easy explanation, for what's coming.



Rector's Message, continued

Something more is needed, and paradoxically, something less as well.

When the crowd demands that Jesus answer the question about why bad stuff happens, and who's to blame for it, Jesus doesn't offer a book or a slogan; instead, he turns their focus from looking out there to looking inside.

There's an old saying: "If you're pointing your finger at someone, you've got three more fingers pointing back at yourself."

Look inside, Jesus says to them, and ask what is it in you that needs to change; to be reformed; to be transformed; and in that looking, remember that repentance isn't something we do to placate an angry God; repentance is that turning around so that we see again that life is a precious gift, with no guarantees attached, but still a precious gift full of possibility.

It is the way of mercy and forgiveness and humility and giving the other gal the benefit of the doubt.

It is the way of leaving to God alone the judgments of who is right and what is wrong; advice Jesus gives over and over as he counsels to let the weeds and wheat grow together; let the good fish and bad mix together, that the rain falls on the just and the unjust alike, and that God is kind to the ungrateful.

Repentance is a call to surrender to the difficult truth that God's ways are not our ways, to let go, to live our lives in the quiet confidence that no matter the circumstances, God is, and God is faithful...

And so we have the story of the fig tree and gardener.

Some hear this story and try to make it neat and tidy: God is the owner, Jesus is the gardener and we are the tree.

Shape up or get cut down!

But perhaps like so much of what Jesus teaches, the true meaning is deeper.

"Why tell a story of an unfruitful fig tree when calamity has just struck? There's no moral advice in this story.

Instead, it's one more time that Jesus confronts our need for answers with God's invitation to simply trust.

Manure, smelly and disgusting, something meant to be hauled away, just might become the very source of new fruit — and as the story unfolds, we don't know if it will work; and yet, in that very uncertainty — is our hope." David Lose, paraphrased.

When we look at the word used by the gardener as he asks the owner for more time for the tree, the word he uses is *Áphes*, which

may be translated as – "Let it be."

It's the same word Jesus utters on the cross, not knowing whether the sacrifice of his life has made any difference at all, not having the answer to his heart wrenching cry: "My God my God why have you forsaken me?"; yet in the face of his uncertainty he utters: "Áphes," "let it be" – "forgive them."

The crowd surrounding Jesus this morning feels vulnerable because of Pilate's slaughter, because of the 18 dead to a collapsing tower.

The crowd gathered to hear Franklin Graham feels vulnerable to cultural changes happening beneath their feet, where those who were once outsiders now have a place at the table, where sure and certain answers to important questions don't seem so sure or certain anymore.

Isa and Charlie felt vulnerable when they threw those books at their well-intentioned givers and we too feel vulnerable in the face of life's uncertainties and disasters.

The barren fig tree stands in its ground, vulnerable to the judgment, but also to the mercy, of the gardener.

And yet:

"It's not a bad thing to feel the full fragility of your life.

It's not a bad thing for you to count your breaths in the dark -- not if it makes you turn toward the light.

It's why that torn place my fear opens up inside of me -- it is a holy place.

When you are in that holy place, look around.

Pay attention to what you feel.

It may hurt to stay there and it may hurt to see, but it's not the kind of hurt that will kill you.

It's the kind that gives you life.

Depending on what you want from God, this may not sound like good news at all .

Rector's Message, continued

. . but for those who know that we cannot make life safe nor God tame, it is the best news of all." Barbara Taylor Brown, paraphrased.

Today's gospel is an invitation to live in the tension, to live in the mystery.

We don't know the fate of the fig tree; nor do we know our own fate, or the fate of those we love -- yet living in the mystery is as old as our faith.

So perhaps what we might take from our travels with Jesus today, in our quest to know the

answers to things that are unknowable, perhaps we can step back from our constant longing for information, and seek instead the transformation that comes with following this strange yet wonderful preacher from Galilee.

+amen



The youth clearing weeds and tilling in St. E's garden.

Apart from being physically fed, we've made it a goal to be spiritually fed as well. There is bible study every Friday 6pm – 9pm followed by a light dinner. We usually start with ice breakers and they separate into smaller groups for some awesome bible study sessions. The readings



Ku A'e Hou Scavenger Hunt was to take a picture with a policeman in Waimanalo

are from the Sunday of that week, usually the gospel. We have some future pastors in our youth y'all!

As you may have already known, every Monday our youth visits Waimanalo for Kū A'e Hou (The New Rising) a gathering where youths from intermediate through to high school get active and play games all night. This terms theme is "ROOTS." This past Monday we had a scavenger hunt all over Waimanalo. It was wonderful of the Kū A'e Hou volunteers to give us a tour guide bumbai these poor Kalihi boys would've gotten lost.



Attendance

Wednesday, Feb 3, Eucharist	16
Sunday, Feb 7, Eucharists & Vespers	225
Shrove Tuesday, Feb 9, Vespers	38
Ash Wednesday, Feb 10, Eucharist	134
Sunday, Feb 14, Eucharists & Vespers	211
Wednesday, Feb 17, Eucharist	21
Sunday, Feb 21, Eucharists & Vespers	214
Wednesday, Feb 24, Eucharist	16
Sunday, Feb 28, Eucharists & Vespers	204

Youth Report

By Viliami Lino

The Youth are off to a slow start this year. Maybe we are on the Chinese calendar. Gong Hey Fat Choy!! New Year, New Project, the youth are now more involved with the church more than ever. We, the youth, have taken the initiative to help take care of our community garden. We tilled, dug and planted green onions and cabbages that will hopefully be ready to harvest soon....they grow up so fast!



A small group bible study session

What's Going On At St. Elizabeth's?



If you'd like to join us Saturday mornings, we make breakfast for the homeless. We've even started a footwashing program, thanks to **Bob Kane**, see next page. Talk to **Fr. David** or **Fane Lino** for more information!

*Left Top: **Josh Lino** helps to cook and prepare the meal.*

Left Upper and Lower Middle: Just a few of the dozens of people that come by for a hot meal on Saturday mornings.

*"We sit at each other's feet and offer unconditional love and kindness, asking nothing in return." – **Bob Kane***



The beautiful women of St Elizabeth's are gathering at 10 am on the last Thursday of each month to learn the different styles of lei making from Hawaii to Tonga to Chuuk and who knows, maybe even a Polish lei!



Left The incredible handymen of St. Elizabeth's, led by our fearless and ever useful **Charlie Steffey**. They're constantly fixing things! Doors, fences, the giant pothole that used to be in the parking lot, the constantly breaking-down bathrooms... you name it, they can fix it! Talk about a well-used gift.

Build Bridges, Not Walls



About a dozen clergy and lay folk gathered to offer a different perspective on the gospel than the one offered by Rev Franklin Graham at the State Capitol. Many folks stopped to say thank you!



“When religion is subsumed into politics then the essential liberating element of the gospel is lost. The church becomes a mere religious department of the state. This is what all governments want, from Hitler and Franco to our modern quasi-Christian states. They see the role of religion to be that of nurturing souls, keeping things calm, providing ideological reinforcement for and support to the status quo, and preserving ‘traditional’ moral values — though morality does not extend beyond personal and sexual realms. [S]uch a church-state alliance is idolatrous and apostate.” *Kenneth Leech*

All during Lent, we are kneeling before our houseless brothers and sisters and washing their feet, carrying out the command of Christ. It is a gift to us to touch people who are often not touched...to be in deep conversation with people we often do not speak with. Many thanks to **Bob Kane** for organizing this beautiful time every Saturday morning from 7 am till 9 am.



“The success of love is in the loving - it is not in the result of loving. Of course it is natural in love to want the best for the other person, but whether it turns out that way or not does not determine the value of what we have done.”

Mother Teresa Of Calcutta

Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

We are now into the Lenten season, the children participate in the opening worship service by reading 'call to worship readings' around the Lenten wreath, before being dismissed to their classes. Six Sundays in Lent, six purple candles, one by one will be extinguished until on Easter Sunday the Christ candle will be lit!

There is no First communion class this Lenten season. The children have all participated in the class in previous years.

We are working on the Youth education program and would welcome any and all ideas to get all the kids involved.

The next project is the Easter Egg Hunt! That's a really egg-citing time for all the kids! **Miss Sarah** is rounding up a committee – please say YES to help! The baskets need to be filled and we hope you can contribute something to put into the baskets! We have 50 baskets to fill. Looking for plastic eggs, little treats to put into the eggs.... 'grass' and pencils! **Jamie** and crew will be dyeing the real easter eggs – Sign up sheet for the hard-boiled eggs and dyeing is up!

The children from classroom B through the Youth in Shim Hall have been practicing their music with **Miss Ajaon** and **Miss Seine**... learning rhythm, tone and pitch! Now we need to project those voices and smile!!!

This year we have seen many changes in the Sunday school attendance. Families move, kids are in to more activities on Sundays! Our acolyte list has shortened, so the same prompt children are participating in the Sunday service as acolytes and crucifers.

Blessed Lent!



Reasons to celebrate!



Well, on Valentines Day we were expecting our beloved Bishop Bob, but unfortunately he became seriously ill and needed to recover.....While disappointed, the good folks of St. E's managed to bring tons of "light" food (was that an ENTIRE roasted pig over there?????) and a marvelous feast ensued.....

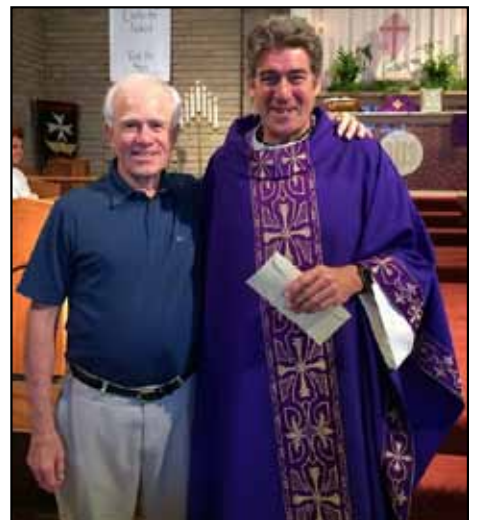


.....Only to be followed (after a full week of fasting of course!) by yet another gut busting feast to welcome in the Year of the Monkey this Chinese New Year what with terrrrrific Lion Dancers who gobbled one dollar bills like popcorn, lit off 1000 fire crackers (yes, they were LEGAL!) and food and food and more food! Many thanks to everyone who cooked and cleaned and set up and took down all to make both of these Sunday's a complete scandal to the Weight Watcher's Club of America! 'urp!!!!

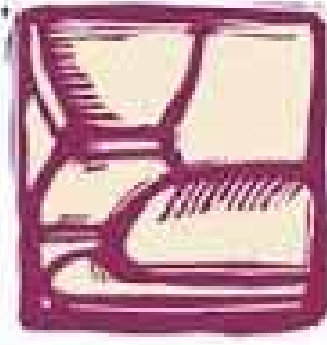
Wally Inglis presenting **Fr. David** and **St. Elizabeth's** a check for \$50,000.00!!



.....and THEN, just one week later, our great pal **Wally Inglis**, a member of a non-profit community organization that wishes to remain anonymous (NOT the Banano Crime Family) gave us a great gift of \$50,000 (dollars NOT pesos) to use toward our ministry with the houseless. WOW!!! THANKS SO MUCH!!!!



One life on this earth is all that we get, whether it is enough or not enough, and the obvious conclusion would seem to be that at the very least we are fools if we do not live it as fully and bravely and beautifully as we can.



St. Elizabeth's Holy Week Worship Schedule

Palm Sunday

March 20
Mass 9:00 AM

Maundy Thursday

March 24,
Mass 6:30 PM

Good Friday

March 25
Stations of the Cross 12:00 PM
Mass with Reserved Sacrament 6:00 PM

Easter Sunday

March 27, 9:00 AM



Happy Birthday

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

Colin Wong	3/01
Kifenin Dopich	
Maile Nicholas	3/02
Obeyi Helly	3/03
Damien Ballesteros	3/04
Roy Chee	3/05
Doreen Ching	3/07
Marites Unarce	
Adriana White	3/09
Arleey Young	3/12
Lillian Tyau	3/13
Yonlene Simpson	
Iustina Eichy	
Sarah Bush	3/14
Ongolea Sungalu	
Ruthann Sorcey	3/16
Haku Blaisdell	3/17
Miriam Hue	
Miranda Young	
Ensen Repaky	3/22
Dorothy Eichelberger	3/23
Isabel Padasdao	
Anseini Lino	3/28
Gerald Lau	3/29
Jefirston Nixon	3/30
Brian Kau	3/31

