

"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 2013

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Priest Associate

The Reverend Dr.
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Who Are You Calling Chicken?

The Rev. David J. Gierlach, Rector

The other Sunday, our 12 year old scolded me after church for referring to God as "her."

She was quite sure I misspoke and told me to be more careful in the future, because, as she went on, "everyone knows God's not a girl, dad."

Which gave me my in to talk to her about the book of our earliest times, Genesis, where our fathers and mothers in faith imagine the beginning of all things; and there is God, creating humanity last of all; and God creates humanity in God's image, male and female he creates them, in God's own image, he creates them.

Tea was a bit startled by this, and since I can rarely startle her, I decided to keep going.

I took her to the poetry of the prophets, starting with Isaiah who has God imploring:

"Can a woman forget her nursing child or show no compassion for the child of her womb? How then can I forget you, oh my people?"

And again, "As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you...." (Isaiah 66:13).

The prophet Hosea sings the same song:

"How can I give you up? It was I who taught you to walk. I took you up in my arms; I healed you, led you with cords of human kindness, with bands of love. I bent down to you and fed you..." (Hosea 11:3-4).

I understand Tea's discomfort, her unease in thinking about God as somehow soft, somehow vulnerable, meaning, in our still

sexist age, somehow female.

Perhaps some of you share that unease.

How, after all, can we think of Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, as soft, as vulnerable?

Eli Weisel, a concentration camp survivor and Noble peace prize laureate, tells of the horrific day when the Nazi's hanged six teenagers to make some ghastly point.

As the boys hang, dying, twitching on the gallows, a man in the crowd roars out: "Where is our God?!"

And an old rabbi standing nearby replies, pointing to the boys on the gallows, "There is our God."

The sense of a suffering, vulnerable God is not widely accepted by many of the Jewish faith, and after the holocaust, many simply walk away from the faith of their parents.

Because God does not swoop in for the rescue, many reason, God either doesn't exist, or worse, God is indifferent to human suffering.

And what about us?

How do we grapple with this notion of a vulnerable God; a God who doesn't rescue us from our crosses, but who comes and hangs there with us?

We Christians are no less troubled than our Jewish brothers and sisters by the vulnerable, the seemingly soft, God.

Yet, the vulnerable God is as ancient as our faith.

You heard it today in Abram's encounter



Rector's Message, continued

with God.

One thing in the story that is particularly strange to our modern ears is this whole business of cutting the cows and goats in half, and stacking the bodies so there is a pathway between the split corpses of these dead animals.

We're not talking sacrifice here.

In those days, that's how agreements get sealed.

Not with a handshake or with your John Hancock on the bottom line – instead, to seal the deal, the parties to the agreement both walk between the split in half dead animals – meaning: if I welsh on this deal, may what happened to these cows happen to me!”

There is submission of the parties to one another.

But did you hear it in today's lesson from Genesis?

Did you see it?

Only God walks the walk between the split animals.

Only God calls down the consequence: if I welsh on this deal, let me be like these mutilated cows.

Only God, in his covenant with Abram, binds himself so completely to us; only God puts God's neck on the block for us.

And what about Abram while God is doing all of this?

Abram's fast asleep.

Sound familiar?

I've been in the moving business lately.

You see, the American flag keeps moving right behind me here in the pulpit, and I keep moving it back to the other side of the chancel.

In our 2000-year history as a church, the practice of allowing national flags in the sacred spaces of the church is a very recent concession to national pride and patriotism.

It seems to have started during World War I but really took off during World War II.

I keep moving it back over there -- not because I'm anti-American-- but because the American eagle – there at the top of the flagpole, is the wrong bird for us Christians to focus on.

Eagles, as we Americans know, as the Roman Empire knew before us, are majestic birds of prey with sharp claws and flesh peeling beaks and wings strong enough to carry away small children.

It is a fearsome bird, and frankly, it has no place here in this or in any other church because, what the gospel tells me to preach and what you have given your lives to in baptism, is not an eagle, but a chicken.

Chickens, I'll grant you, aren't very majestic.

They are pretty useless as fighters -- they're as common as ants and they're not particularly handsome to look at.

We know a lot about chickens here at St. E's.

Just as our Wednesday healing service was getting started the other day, one of our many teenage chicks got lost in the back room and made a terrible racket until she got shushed out the door.

And as many of you know, we have quite a history with these chickens.

The day after Fr. Saimone died, a rooster showed up outside the rectory, followed by a few hens -- and they have kept a gaggle of chickens running all over the property ever since.



I know these chickens drive the gardeners in our community nuts, what with eating the lettuce and all, but having these chickens around tells me that maybe, just maybe, we are really starting to get it, when it comes to our faith.

Because the bird that our faith calls us to look up to as our role model, the bird that actually looks like and acts like God: the bird that ought to be at the top of every church flagpole, isn't the majestic eagle -- it's the chicken!

That's not me saying so, that's Jesus telling us so!

And he's telling us so right here, in today's gospel.

As he laments the hard hearts of his own people; he doesn't long to carry them off on eagle's wings, he doesn't call upon the lion

Rector's Message

of Judah to pounce and protect -- because Jesus is, like a mother hen -- protective yet defenseless -- loving, yet totally vulnerable to the teeth of that wily old fox.

And I think this is where C. S. Lewis gets it wrong in the Narnia stories, because Aslan, the talking lion, who represents Jesus, should have been a talking chicken instead!

Chest out, wings spread wide, the perfect target to be eaten by the foxes of this world: all the while, safeguarding her young brood behind her.

And at the same time, grieving for the chicks: the Herod's, the Pilate's, the ones who have it all together who refuse to seek the safety she offers in her death...

See, this is why Jesus is so maddening!

Just when we think we have a God of power and might, just when we think God invites us to live lives of power and might, here comes Jesus, in the form of a hen.

"Imitate me," Paul says today, "as I imitate Christ."

Be a chicken, be a mother hen!

That's why I can't have an eagle looking over my shoulder -- because your God and mine isn't like an eagle at all, your God and mine is like a chicken.

"Imitate me," says Paul, "as I imitate Christ."

Sit with that for a minute while I tell you one last story.

Most of you remember the days when it was happening.

Back in August, 1991, a couple of years after the Berlin Wall fell, and shortly after the Soviet Union collapsed.

You'll remember on August 20, 1991, when martial law is declared in Russia, and Boris Yeltzin is holding on to civilian power by a thread.

The army is mobilized and a coup begins: everyone is told to go home and it appears the old guard is making a comeback.

Just then, the babushkas, the old Russian ladies who for nearly 80 years kept the church alive in a country that was officially atheist; these old ladies who are laughed at and condescended to for years -- the babushkas come out that night.

Some of these old ladies feed the pro-democracy supporters, others help out at medical stations, some kneel and pray for a miracle, and still others climb on top of the tanks and, staring into the slits at the army men inside, tell them that now they have new orders, orders from God: "You shall not kill."

The young men get out of their tanks.

The attack never comes.

After three days, the tide turns, and the old guard creeps away.

—T. Long, *Talking Ourselves into Being Christian* (paraphrased).

Mother hens save the day for Mother Russia.

Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem.

Once there, he will spread his wings, and bare his chest, and the fox will indeed devour him.

The chicks will scatter, not one stands with him.

"Where is our God?!" The shout goes out from so many lips.

He is there, hanging on the tree.

Perhaps during this season of Lent we might reconsider our love affair with eagles, our love affair with foxes, and pray:

Oh, gentle God, soften us! Let the fire of your love thaw the frost within us. Let the light of Your justice sear away our blindness,

Let the grace of Your compassion heal our hardened spirits.

Oh, living God, soften us! That, flowing with Your grace, We be impelled to face the world In bold compassion,

That, driven to justice, we may dare to cry aloud for the little ones, the raped, the beaten the imprisoned and the hungry.

Oh, living God, soften us!

Sweep us forward in a mighty wave of mercy to heal our hurting world.

(From: "There was no Path, So I trod One"; Edwina Gateley).

+amen



First Holy Communion

Classes take place **March 10th and 17th**. All classes will be at 8:15 to 8:45 before Mass.

Preparing for Lent



Kung Hee Fat Choy! Chinese New Years

The Lunar Year of the Snake celebration continued at St. Elizabeth's on February 17th, bringing good fortune to all! In traditional St. E's Chinese celebration, everyone was happily content devouring the food prepared by **Raymond Siu** and generous potluck foods of every nation.



Shrove Tuesday

Thank you to everyone for participating in Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper on Feb. 12th. What a great start into the Lent! **Nora Kurosu** and **Lillian Tyau** prepped the evening, **Lowell Ing** and son, **Doug Ing**, along with **Ignacia Terno**, made the scrumptious pans of French toast, **Gretchen Jong** flipped pancakes, cups of fruit cocktail were dished out by many helping hands...so many cooks in the kitchen! **Fr David** was left to do his evening service and bring the hungry tummies back into Shim Hall for the feast. **James Fitzpatrick** selected 10 of our very finest Sunday school students to wash their hands and serve the pancakes, French toast, fruit cocktail, with globs of syrup and cinnamon...to our hundreds of guests! From the very young toddlers to our own **Akiu Chock**... everyone had a great pancake/french toast dinner!



STEM Education at St. Elizabeth's



Na Hokulele's job training classes are going gangbusters! Working with **Fane Lino** and the other trainers, folks are learning home health skills, resumé writing and computer skills – all necessary to start swimming in the stream of the 21st century economy.

The HPU PhD candidates, **Juliette** and **Scott**, (right and below right) who are the backbone of this program are simply wonderful in their enthusiasm, dedication and sheer joy, all of which points to the presence of the Holy Spirit moving in our midst.

Much thanks to all!



Pacific Island Ministry

The Pacific Island Ministry is continuing its educational efforts, this time hosting a class on Micronesian culture at St. Mary's Episcopal Church on Saturday, February 23 (below) with our dear friend Josie, a MSW candidate at UH Manoa, who is from Micronesia and who provides exceptional insight about this ancient culture.



“Each of us has his own endowment from God, one to live in this way, another in that. It is an impertinence then, to try to find out why St. Paul was not given St. Peter’s grace, or St. Peter given St. Paul’s. There is only one answer to such questions: the church is a garden patterned with countless flowers, so there must be a variety of sizes, colors, scents – of perfections, after all. Each has its value, its charm, its joy; while the whole vast cluster of these variations makes for beauty in its most graceful form.”

—St. Francis de Sales



FACE Equity Summit

Faith Action for Community Equity (FACE), the interfaith social justice group to which St. Elizabeth’s belongs, is holding its third annual Equity summit on **Saturday, March 9th** from 9 am to 2 pm at the UH Manoa, School of Business. The summit looks at a wide range of public issues including Gambling, Education Reform, the status of Compact of Free Association migrants to Hawaii (Micronesian, Marshallese, Palau) and many other issues. All are invited to attend. Lunch will be provided.

For more information, email FACE staff at



Happy Birthday

God’s blessings on those with March birthdays!

| | |
|--------------------|------|
| Colin Wong | 3/1 |
| Kifenin Dopich | 3/1 |
| Obeyi Helly | 3/3 |
| Damien Ballesteros | 3/4 |
| Roy Chee | 3/5 |
| Doreen Ching | 3/7 |
| Marites Unarce | 3/7 |
| Aadriana White | 3/9 |
| Arleen Young | 3/12 |
| Istina Eichy | 3/13 |
| Annalei Badua | 3/13 |
| Sarah Bush | 3/14 |
| Ruthann Sorcey | 3/16 |
| Haku Blaisdell | 3/17 |
| Miriam Hue | 3/17 |
| Ensen Repaky | 3/22 |
| DC Eichelberger | 3/23 |
| Anaseini Lino | 3/28 |
| Gerald Lau | 3/29 |
| Brian Kau | 3/31 |



“I don’t care if you are the CEO of a large oil company, you can’t claim your soul as a business loss.”



"Let's go to a bar and do something funny."

Bulletin Blooper

The bulletin of Holy Nativity in Aina Haina, HI, invited the congregation to participate in the "Passing of the Peach" (Peace) one Sunday morning.

"I was there!" – Katherine Crosier

Ashes to Go



Over one hundred people had ashes imposed on Ash Wednesday at Kekaulike Mall by Father David and Mother Imelda.

Sacred Sojourns

May 22-30, 2013 Jerusalem and the Holy Land
May 16-22, 2013 Desert Camel Trek to Petra and Wadi Rum

Mother Jodene Hawkins is once again leading a women's pilgrimage tour of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Itinerary and experience include:

- Jerusalem's Old City, Dome of the Rock, the Empty Tomb, the Western Wall
- Shepherd's fields, Bethlehem, Nazareth, the Sea of Galilee, Mt. of the Beatitudes
- Jericho, The Judean Desert, Jordan River, St. Peter's home by the Sea of Galilee
- Garden of Gethsemane, the Way of the Cross, the Healing Pools of Bethesda
- Church of Mary Magdalene in Jerusalem, Mary's Well and Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth
- Historical, archaeological, and contemporary engagement with the Christian, Jewish and Muslim faiths, worship, and spirituality
- A journey to Ramallah and Nablus with visits to the Episcopal Arab School and Jacob's Well
- Reflection and personal quiet times at sacred sites
- Festive dinner hosted by a local family and a visit to a local cooperative



More information can be found on the website:

sacredsojourns.net

or by emailing Mother Jodene:

jodene.sacredsojourns@gmail.com

'Like' us on Facebook!

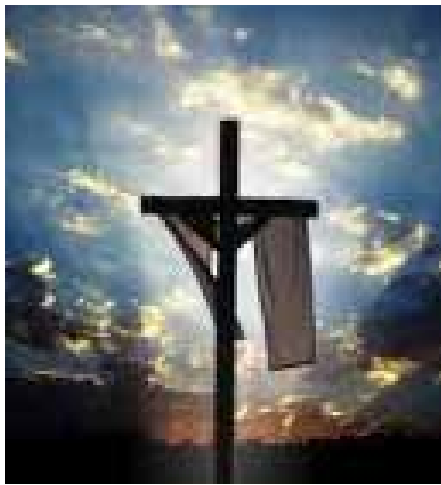


St. Elizabeth's now has a Facebook page and all are encouraged to 'Like' us for the latest news and pictures of the parish and its people. You can find us at <http://www.facebook.com/StElizabethsEpiscopalChurch>.

Please feel free to share your pictures and news on our Facebook page.

"A physician gave a man eight months to live. The man couldn't pay his bill, so the doctor gave him another eight months."

—Author unknown



Holy Week Worship Services

Holy Week and Easter Schedule

Palm Sunday, March 24, 9:00 am Palm Sunday Procession,
Reading of the Passion according to Luke

Maundy Thursday, March 28, 6:30 pm, Footwashing,
Stripping of the Altar

Good Friday, March 29, 12:00 noon Stations of the Cross
6:00 pm Good Friday Liturgy

Easter Day, March 31, 9:00 AM. Festival Holy Communion
Potluck brunch and Easter Egg
hunt following the service.

Jubilee Center

It was 30 years ago, at the Episcopal General Convention meeting in New Orleans, that delegates established **Jubilee Ministry** as “a ministry of joint discipleship in Christ with poor and oppressed people, wherever they are found, to meet basic human needs and to build a just society,” concluding that this “is at the heart of the mission of the church.”



The Jubilee network consists of over 600 Jubilee Ministry Centers which empower the poor and oppressed in their communities by providing direct services, such as food, shelter, and healthcare, and also by advocating for human rights.



St. Elizabeth’s has just been designated a Jubilee Center by the National Church!

This is a designation that recognizes consistent outreach ministries to those most in need and opens us up for training and grant opportunities.

“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*, 80.



Easter Lilies

Donations will be gladly accepted for purchasing Easter flowers for decorating the church. **Deadline: March 17, 2013**

Name _____

No. of lilies @ \$9.00 each _____

In memory / honor of: _____

*The best things in life . . .
. . . are not things*

Darrell D. Sage,
Anderson, SC.

