

"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

May 2015

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 "Ajaon" Chen
Choir Director

Marie Wang
Organist

Katherine Crosier
Parish Administrator
Editor and Layout
Music Consultant

Caren Esaki
Senior Warden

David Kleinschmidt,
Junior Warden

Donovan Young, Secretary

Mary Ann Lentz
Treasurer

Website:
www.stelizabeth720.org

Email:
stelizabethhawaii@gmail.com

Cut Off But Made New

by The Rev. David J. Gierlach

If you think of faith as something very soft and sweet, a place to go to get away from it all, well, today's definitely NOT for you.

Sure, there's a part of our lives in faith where comfort and assurance and tenderness rule the day.

Then there are days like today, when we get a peek at God who's got her clippers out, ready to use what life throws at us to change us into something newer, something more beautiful, something even tougher than we ever imagined we might become.

When I think of God rummaging around in our lives like that, I think of Stephen King, the writer of all those horror books, who goes out for a morning jog and is creamed by a speeding, reckless, renegade van.

He spends months in the hospital in horrible pain.

But, in a radio interview given after his recovery, he admits the accident is changing his life.

He writes some of his best works after he gets clobbered.

"Still, if someone is giving me the choice of retiring peacefully to New England or getting hit by a van and writing two or three more good books, I'll take retirement in a heartbeat."

A friend of mine says:

"In my experience, that speeding, disruptive, homicidal van is sometimes named God."
(Willimon, *Undone By Easter*, 27.)

Which brings us to the first of our encounters this morning with this God who finds beauty and growth and maturity in cutting things off.

Exhibit A for that is our eunuch.

You know what a eunuch is.

It's a man who's been separated from his manhood!

It's been cut off, quite literally!

Ouch!

Now this particular eunuch is clearly a wealthy man.

He's in a coach, the Rolls Royce of the day, he's in charge of all the Queen's money, and you can bet he lives a materially comfortable life.

But of course, material comfort comforts only so far.

There is our need for emotional comfort, spiritual comfort, and those needs, because he is a man cut off, are probably lacking.

He has no family, no children to carry his lineage.

No wife to mourn his passing.

And the question becomes, why is this eunuch reading some obscure passage from the prophet Isaiah?

What is it about that passage that has this eunuch so curious, so full of wondering?

As we heard just a few minutes ago, he's reading this:

"By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people."
(Is. 53:8.)

I'll bet you dollars to donuts what's got his attention is the "cut off" part, since this



Rector's Message, continued

eunuch not only has a precious part of his body cut off; but because of that circumstance, he is also cut off from a heritage, cut off from progeny, even cut off from being able to fully worship with everyone else, since, according to the law of Moses, and I quote: "The eunuch shall have no place in this congregation" (Deut. 23:1).

So no wonder he is intrigued by Isaiah's victim, who, even though he too is cut off, nevertheless will be the means of salvation for his people.

It's why we preachers do a great disservice to our people when we try to pass along softhearted sentiment and holy sounding clichés as the wisdom of God.

Somehow we all know, just like that eunuch, that the living God doesn't exist in needlepoint on a pillow, or in Hallmark cards.

The living God meets us in our deepest hurts, at times of our most profound need, in those places of confusion and bewilderment.

And that is so because Jesus, who was himself cut off from the land of the living, leaving no children to remember him, no wife to mourn him; rejected by the religious big shots, executed on the order of the political establishment; yet, through the power of God, this Jesus swallows up all that rejection, all that death and sets in motion a power that creates the biggest family the world has ever known; a family that, at its' best, knows no limits, excludes no person, and reaches into every corner of the earth.

Somehow, the very condition of being cut off gives way to something new, something unimaginable, something unspeakably holy.

And so this morning we are invited, we are even encouraged, to think of what might be cut off in your life, and in mine.

Has it been the death of a spouse or child or parent?

For our elders, perhaps it is good health that is cut off due to a fall or an illness; or just the general decline in strength that comes with old age.

Speaking of which, I had the great misfortune of experiencing exactly that earlier this week.

Some 8 year olds came by and asked to play basketball.

I gave them a ball.

Then they asked me to move the basketball hoop away from the big puddle, and as you know, our basketball hoops are on those big wooden frames with some wheels on the bottom.....

So, out I went, and as I pushed my shoulder into the basketball frame, one of the boys yelled at his friend:

"Why aren't you helping Father David move that?!"

He's an old man you know!"

But the experience of being cut off is not reserved to eunuchs or to the

elderly.

My soon to be fifteen year old daughter announced just the other day that the average member of her generation feels more anxiety than people who were confined to mental hospitals in the 1950s.

How she knows that I don't know, but it is a symptom that many of our youth encounter, in the midst of so much material prosperity, feeling cut off from one another, from nature, even from God.

But whatever the cutting off you have experienced, we Christians know, and sometimes we need to be reminded, that the pain that comes with cutting is not the end of the story.

What we come to see as our lives unfold, as our spiritual journeys take shape through all manner of endings and beginnings, is that God takes all of these cuttings, none of which may be good in themselves, and somehow, uses his masterful hands to turn our cuttings into prunings, so that new flowers, new leaves, even new fruit, can grow out of old stumps.

It's not God's work alone that causes this to happen.

We need to help.

And we help by letting go.

Letting go of trying to control people, places and things.

Letting go of my way of doing things.

Letting go of outcomes.

Letting go doesn't mean disappearing into nothingness.

Letting go means remembering who we are.

We are branches completely connected to the vine that is God.

We are children of the living God, this God who knows the number of hairs on your head, this God who is closer to us than our own breath.

And maybe what all this means is that faith is not so much something soft and sweet, something to help us get away from it all.

Maybe faith is that gift that helps us to see that life's tragedies, which can ram through our lives like the out of control van that sent Stephen

Rector's Message, continued

King flying, are not things to be dreaded or feared or avoided at all costs.

But that somehow, this creator God, who is always creating all that is, you and I included, that this God uses life's catastrophes, life's disappointments, life's failures, to transform our hearts and minds and souls so that we may slowly come to resemble, bit by bit, the face of she who made us.

Which is, after all, our destiny.

+amen



“The Resurrection of Jesus is...a symbol of hope...I don't see how you can show love...without being in solidarity with the victims of this world. And if you are in solidarity with the victims, I don't see how you can avoid the cross. The theology of the cross is the theology of love in our real world.”

Jon Sobrino

Celebration Christine Ling



Christine Ling was a life long giver. She gave particularly as a professional in the field of public health, looking always for new and innovative ways to help increase the quality and availability of health care for those in our society who lacked money, connections and prestige. Chris was a devoted Episcopalian, a long time member of St Barnabas in Ewa, and coming to St. E's in maybe 2008 with lovely sister **Juliette Ling** and their good pal **Fran Kramer**. What a joy Chris was to us. We celebrated her life in a wonderful service on April 25 and we commend her to almighty God. Until we meet again good friend, until we meet again!

A beautiful rainbow!



right over St. Elizabeth's!

Senior Luncheon

The Senior Luncheon Wagon train got off to a great start at Nice Day Dim Sum Delight Restaurant with a nice gaggle of old friends joining in. We plan to have these lunches at NO COST to our elders every second Thursday of the month from April through September. It's hard for some of the over 39 crowd to get out at night for the monthly Spaghetti dinners, so the mid-day dining seems to work just fine. We will be sampling different restaurants each month and if YOU have a favorite, why just say the word and we'll schedule a date for just that place!

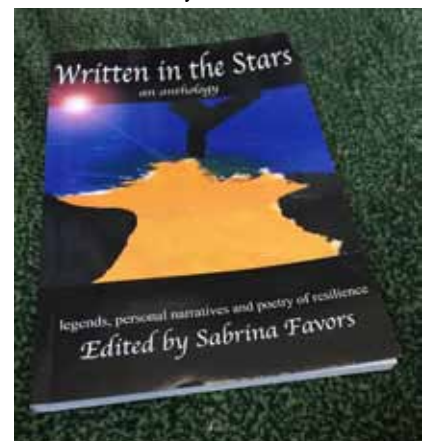


Written in the Stars

Written in the Stars is a beautiful anthology of stories and sharing by many in our Micronesian community and by those of us who have gotten to know them these last many years.

This wonderful book was put together through the efforts of the Na Hokulele project that we hosted for three years here at St. E's. We have a bunch of books that we are giving away. What a wonderful way to enter into the lives and culture of fellow human beings!

If you don't have a copy and would like one, just raise your hand!



Jews have God's promise and if we Christians have it, too, then it is only as those chosen with them, as guests in their house, that we are new wood grafted onto their tree. -Karl Barth

Forgotten Soul

I turn my head, and there she is once more
In her disheveled, worn and tattered dress,
One pew behind me near the exit door
She sits head bowed...an image of distress.

Two weeks now on a Sunday she is there...
The same pew in the church, the same old clothes.
She shows forlornness that makes me aware
Her life is sadly filled with countless woes.

This time she lifts her head and looks at me,
As tears swell in her eyes and down her cheek.
My heart is broken by the hurt I see
Within her wanting eyes so dark and meek.

I gaze into her face and see her fears
Yet, slightest twinkle in her sullen eyes...
With tiny smile, she wipes her falling tears
Away, but still I hear the painful cries

That echo from her heart so silently
Of weakened body, anguished mind and soul...
I wonder what in life could possibly
Have caused her to now suffer such a toll.

And I surmise that homeless she must be,
But still some faith has brought her to this spot
Where healing strength from God might possibly
Renew her spirit when her life cannot.

The mass soon ends, and I arise and turn,
So now in front of her I sadly stand...
She grasps my hand and says, "God Bless, you earn
His blessings for a heart that understands."

© Sandra M. Haight 2014

Soon to be

Deacon Viliami Langi



Our much missed pal **Fr. Saimone Lino** had a dream of attracting members of the Tongan community into the Episcopal Church. One of the first friends he met turned out to be a gracious elder by the name of **Viliami Langi**. A long time lay leader in the Methodist tradition, Viliami found himself drawn to the Episcopal Church and ultimately brought just about his entire family into the fold.

Now, after great work by our Commission on Ministries and Standing Committee, The Bishop and so many others, he will soon be known as The Reverend Viliami Langi, Permanent Deacon in the Episcopal Church. Fantastic!



Bishop's Visit, April 17



We had the great honor of hosting our Bishop, the **Rt. Rev. Robert Fitzpatrick** for his annual visitation with us. A HUGE crowd turned out for our first Spaghetti Dinner of the year, and there were so many main course “side” dishes that the spaghetti practically got swallowed up! (Well, actually, the spaghetti DID get swallowed up.....that’s why we cooked it!).....But the Bishop and his lovely wife Bea had plenty to eat, many folks to talk story with and once again a great time was had by all!



Attendance

Wednesday, April 1 Eucharists	43
Maundy Thursday, April 2	38
Good Friday, April 3	77
Easter Day, April 5	225
Easter Confirmation, April 5	80
Sunday, April 12 Eucharists & Vespers	209
Wednesday, April 15 Eucharist	25
Sunday, April 19 Eucharists & Vespers	204
Wednesday, April 22 Eucharist	19
Sunday, April 26 Eucharists & Vespers	195
Wednesday April 29 Eucharist	20

Free Organ Concert



Kathy Crosier’s former organ student, **Joey Fala**, who came as a child to St. Elizabeth’s to play the organ for several services, is now pursuing a concert career as an organist. He will be giving a free concert at the Lutheran Church of Honolulu, 1730 Punahou Street, on Sunday, May 24 at 5:00 pm, in celebration of the church organ’s 40th anniversary. A reception and tour of the organ chambers will follow the concert. All are welcome.

Sunday School News

On Mothers' Day, the Sunday School children pay tribute to their 'MOTHER' – be it their mom, tutu, aunty – a mother figure important in the children's lives! The children will sing a praise of Thanksgiving during the offertory. **Miss Seine Lino** and **Miss Ajaon** have been busy working with the children! **Mrs. Doris Lam** and **Miss Jamie Chock** are busy planting and picking flowers for the 'moms'...if you happen to notice, that's what's growing in the 'Sunday School' planter box!

The school year is quickly coming to a close. The last day of Sunday School will be on Pentecost, May 24th. On Pentecost we will recognize our dedicated staff of teachers, some 40 Sunday School children and this year we will also recognize 19 student acolytes and youth crucifers. The participation of the Sunday School has certainly grown not only in the classrooms but in the Sunday services as well.

This past Sunday, we had 2 new families join the Sunday School program: 4 more children. It's never too late to jump right in to Sunday School!



Miss Seine Lino teaches the Sunday School the music for Mother's Day.



Making candy lei for Pentecost.

M: is for the million things she did for me
O: means only that she's growing old
T: is for the tears she shed to save me
H: is for her heart of purest gold"
E: is for her eyes, with love - light kindness
R: means right and right she'll always be

*Put them all together; They spell M-O-T-H-E-R
 The word that means the whole world to me!
 Happy Mothers' Day, Mom, Tutu, Aunty...*

We expect 2 more children to be enrolled next week. During the summer Miss Ajaon will pick up the classroom time during the church service on Sundays and have a great music program going. Everyone is welcomed to join the class. Watch for a forthcoming announcement as to the start-up Sunday.



Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with
May birthdays!

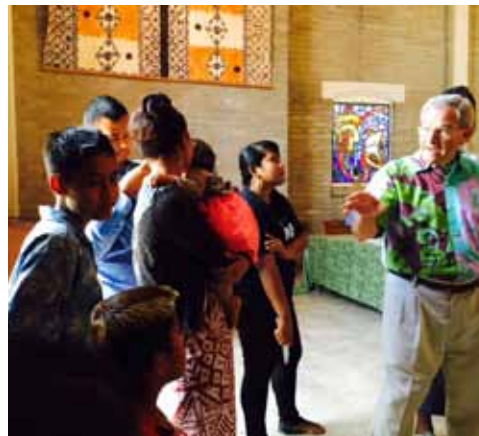
Richard Haller	5/2
Jennie Pang	5/3
Taylor Venenciano	5/3
Dr. Gerald Gifford	5/4
Evelyn Tyau	5/4
Mermi Dereas	5/4
Leslie Mitsuka	5/5
Kalisi Lavulavu	5/7
Michelle Lum	5/7
Preston Lentz	5/8
Katherine Roke	5/8
Jessie Hayashi	5/10
Margie Leong	5/10
Felicidad Bueno	5/12
Inoleen Eichy	5/13
Liesl Eng	5/14
Rowena Blaisdell	5/15
Iwickson Este	5/15
Chase Pacupac	5/18
Delia B. Martin	5/18
Shirley Lau	5/22
Joseph Tolentino	5/24
Ruby Au	5/24
Susana Baldonado	5/25
May Chock	5/26
Helen Tom	5/26
Dwight Kokubun	5/26
Greg Smith	5/26
Marjory Tyau	5/28
Dorothy Jung	5/31
Jayden Shiroma	5/31



Acolyte Training



Preston Lentz (above left) is joined by **Malcolm Keleawe Hee**, both of whom are studying for the priesthood, in providing acolyte training to the youth.



Keleawe (in plaid shirt) will be with us at St. Elizabeth's through December. The children all met with Preston and Keleawe on April 19th after the Sunday service.

New Oral History

Our Parish Administrator, **Katherine Crosier**, has finished interviewing the *kupuna* (elders) of St. Elizabeth's, and has compiled the stories into a beautiful picture book. If you would like to see a copy, please make arrangements with Kathy in the office. Orders can be taken for hardcover books (8-1/2 x 11) at \$35 and paperbacks (6x9) are \$25.

