

"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 2018

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

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Choir Director

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God

The Rev. David J. Gierlach

"Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus."

This is the scripture that Philip uses as a jumping off place to share with the eunuch something about just who God is:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is cut off from the earth."

Even though we have heard these words a thousand times, truth be told we still think of God as the master puppeteer, in control of all things, good and bad.

We think of God as one who gives life and takes it. How many funerals have we all been to when the well meaning but badly misled minister says something like: "God wanted our loved one to be with him in heaven now" or "it was God's will that she died."

And who, hearing these words, hasn't felt that sting of revulsion at a God who could so carelessly, so frivolously, tear out our heart?

But this is not our faith, and that is why Phillip begins to explain our faith with the passage we just read.

God enters our lives in vulnerability and weakness; a baby born in a food trough.

God enters our life in scandal, being born to an unwed teenager in a culture that met such things with stoning at worst and ostracism at best.

In Jesus, God pitches his tent with the poor and outcast, with those society sneers at.

In Jesus, God submits to the powers and principalities of this world, and endures an unspeakably painful death.

So much for God the master puppeteer.

So much for a God who would destroy families and lives by willy nilly picking who shall live and who shall die.

No, this world is full of pain and accidents and death — all on its own.

But God doesn't leave us alone as we face such things.

God becomes one of us, in Jesus, and faces all these things with us — drinking the pain to its dregs — so that your deepest pain, my deepest pain, is known intimately by the God who walks this same walk.

I think this perhaps is something of what Phillip may have told that eunuch on that fancy coach ride, that God knows what its like to be "cut off" from all that matters; that God, in Jesus, endures being cut off for our sake, that the time spent in the place of being cut off is not only the time of our greatest miseries, but also the time when we might slowly learn our deepest wisdom.

For those who haven't heard of a eunuch before, it is the name for a man who has had his manhood removed, indeed, cut off.

Which means this 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 children, 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 soft-



hearted 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.

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

How she knows this 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 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 pruning's, so that new flowers, new leaves, new fruit, can grow out of old stumps.

Steven King, the writer of all those horror books, had just such an experience not too many years ago.

He was out on a morning jog on a lonely country road when a van came speeding along, lost control, and smashed into Mr. King. 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 a good book, I'll take retirement in a heartbeat."

Don't we all feel that way?

And yet, it is undeniable that our losses, our cuttings, in time, are a profound source of growth and the cause of a deepening wisdom.

The pain from the cutting never goes away, but over time, we grow larger so that the space occupied by the pain becomes smaller - not because the pain becomes smaller, but because we grow larger.

And there is this.

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.

Nor is faith about following the rules and looking good to the outside world.

Maybe faith is that gift that helps us to see that life's tragedies, while unavoidable and tragic and sad, are not the final chapter of our story.

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

After all, isn't that our destiny?

+amen



Regional Confirmation/ Reception/ReAffirmation



Bishop Bob confirms the amazing **Anau Tokoma'ata**.....



...and the marvelous **Cherish Langi**.....



and receives intrepid **Senior Warden Ken Yamasaki**



...and our Office Administrator extraordinaire **Jennifer Beckham**!!!!!!
Congrats to you all!!!!

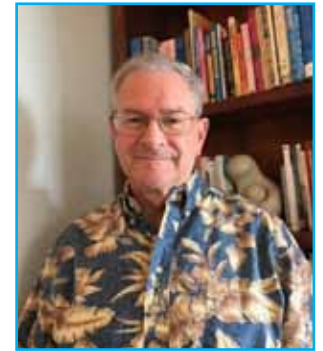
Happy Birthday

God's blessings on those with May birthdays!

Richard Haller	05/02
Jennie Pang	
Taylor Venenciano	05/03
Gerald Gifford	05/04
Evelyn Tyau	
Mermi Dereas	
Leslie Mitsuka	05/05
Kalisi Lavulavu	05/07
Michelle Lum	
Preston Lentz	05/08
Katherine Roke	
Jessie Hayashi	05/10
Margie Leong	
Felicidad Bueno	05/12
Inoleen Eichy	05/13
Liesl Eng	05/14
Rowena Blaisdell	05/15
Iwickson Este	
Chase Pacupac	05/18
Delia B. Martin	
Shirley Lau	05/22
Joseph Tolentino	05/24
Ruby Au	
Susana Baldonado	05/25
May Wai Hin Chock	05/26
Helen Tom	
Dwight Kokubun	
Greg Smith	
Marjory Tyau	05/28
Dorothy Jung	05/31
Jayden Shiroma	

Bishop's Visit 2018

Upcoming Ordinations!



Bishop Bob blessed us with his NOT Sunday visit on April 18. He led our morning healing service and did a bang up job leading the totally cool bible study time. Afterwards there was a chance to eat (and eat and eat and eat!) and talk story with our Bishop. Many thanks to all who turned out for the very wonderful occasion. The results are in: a super good time was had by all!!!

So happy to report that the Bishop has announced and the Standing Committee approved the ordination of a whole flock of folks, two of whom are our very own: **Preston Lentz** and **Mark Haworth!** **Preston** and **Mary Ann** have been members of St. E's since 2007 and **Mark and Jill** have served Mark's internship here since what, 2008???? Nah, since 2016 we tink. They will be ordained to the transitional diaconate on **June 9 at 10:00 at St Andrew's Cathedral!** Next stop, ordination to the priesthood! Our dear **Fane Lino** remains in the ordination program and continues with her journey on this road. We look forward to all of these new laborers working in the fields of the Lord!



Sunday School News

By Sue Yap

Thank you to our generous parishioners, family and friends! Throughout the 2017-2018 School year, you have generously supported the children and their programs! We have made tweeks and twists in the programs, we have been flexible with the schedules...we are now looking to the end of an awesome school year! Our last day of Sunday School instructions will be on May 27th! A 'presentation of certificates' recognizing the students and our dedicated band of acolytes will be on the 27th of May. Please let us know who you are - Seniors... and where will you be going in the fall? Tanner? Tea? ... ???

This summer **Miss Ajaon** is preparing a 6-week Sunday music program. The program will be open to all students and we are hoping you all participate this summer. More on the specific dates to come!!!

Thank you to our teachers and helpers who never missed a beat and always stepped up to the plate sharing their time and talent with the children.

Safe and Happy Summer!



All our Awesome kids from preschool through high school lifted their voices and sang, *Jesus Loves Me!*, after the announcements! **Teddy's** on the bongos, **Miss Ajaon** on piano! The Handbell and select youth choir led by **Mark Haworth** melodiously sang the Offertory Hymn! *Alleluia, the Lord is risen!*



The Sunday School helped distribute candles before the service on Easter!



April Attendance

Sunday, April 1,.....	314
Sunday, April 8,.....	237
Wednesday, April 11,.....	16
Sunday, April 15,.....	187
Wednesday, April 18,.....	28
Sunday, April 22,.....	286
Wednesday, April 25,.....	18
Sunday, April 29,.....	209



Holy Week saw the third annual fabulous Easter Camp what with many of our youth and adults spending Thursday through Saturday camping out at the church and taking part in a whole gaggle of fun activities. There was **Rodney** teaching everyone how to make a totally cool hat out of palm leaves, not to mention baskets and,, was that a tractor trailer made of palms?????? And a dozen of our youth took part in a First Holy Communion Class so that we all might have a better understanding of those sacred mysteries. Thanks to our intrepid Youth Leader **Melanie Langi** for organizing and supervising this super fun event!





Holy Week also involved painting a mural on the Catholic Worker house, now known as Wallyhouse, in honor of our benefactor and long time peace activist **Wally Inglis**, all of which culminated in a very moving recollection of our Lord's passion as we walked the Stations of the Cross, using the beautiful Icons donated by the **Chock sisters** in memory of mom and dad.



"Pity the nation whose people are sheep,
and whose shepherds mislead them.
Pity the nation whose leaders are liars, whose sages are silenced,
and whose bigots haunt the airwaves.
Pity the nation that raises not its voice,
except to praise conquerors and acclaim the bully as hero
and aims to rule the world with force and by torture.
Pity the nation that knows no other language but its own
and no other culture but its own.
Pity the nation whose breath is money
and sleeps the sleep of the too well fed.
Pity the nation — oh, pity the people who allow their rights to erode
and their freedoms to be washed away.
My country, tears of thee, sweet land of liberty."
— Lawrence Ferlinghetti



What is a Catholic Worker?

"Are you Catholic?" we are often asked. No and Yes.

"No," if you are asking are we members of the Roman Catholic Church, headed by the Bishop of Rome, currently Pope Francis. We are Episcopalians, the American branch of the Church of England which separated from Rome in the 1500s.

"Yes!" if you are asking about the "one holy catholic and apostolic Church," which we profess in the Nicene Creed every Sunday. In this context Catholic is roughly synonymous with "universal," having no boundary or lines drawn that demarcate those who are "in" and those who are "out" such as Roman Catholic v. Anglo Catholic. Nor do we see ourselves separate from the world. Instead we see our life as an integral part of the world and society.

The Catholic Worker movement began in 1933 with the ministry of Dorothy Day (1897-1980), who sought to make life easier for the poor, especially through practicing radical hospitality; and Peter Maurin (1877-1949), who wanted to make it easier for people to be good. The movement, now world-wide, seeks to follow the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and evolved to have four platforms: round-table discussions to include all sorts from poor to rich; social activism to change structures of injustice; houses of hospitality that exercise radical welcome; and farms to rediscover the proper meaning of labor and our essential connection to the land.

Wallyhouse at St. Elizabeth's is primarily a House of Hospitality, but we aim to engage in round table discussions and activism, and to build a small communal garden. Stay tuned for next month's article that will describe our specific forms of ministry and how you can get involved!

NOTES FROM THE CATHOLIC WORKERS

What the Catholic Worker Believes *a poem by Peter Maurin*

The Catholic Worker believes in the gentle personalism of traditional Catholicism. The Catholic Worker believes in the personal obligation of looking after the needs of our brothers and sisters. The Catholic Worker believes in the daily practice of the Works of Mercy. The Catholic Worker believes in Houses of Hospitality for the immediate relief of those who are in need. The Catholic Worker believes in the establishment of Farming Communes where each one works according to their ability and gets according to their need. The Catholic Worker believes in creating a new society within the shell of the old with the philosophy of the new, which is not a new philosophy but a very old philosophy, a philosophy so old that it looks like new.