

*"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

**October 2013**

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## Other People's Money

*by The Rev. David J. Gierlach*

Spending other people's money is such an easy thing to do.

When I was about 20 and in the seminary training to become a priest, an upperclassman left me his car to use for the summer.

It was an older car, and so he told me, if anything went wrong with it, here's my account information, just use the money to get the car fixed.

Well, as it turns out, all kinds of things went wrong with that car, and by the end of the summer, the car was working, but the fellow's bank account was wiped out.

He was not a happy camper when he found out.....

And it taught me a lesson as a young man about just how easy it is to spend other people's money.

That wing of the Republican Party known as the Tea Party is constantly arguing that the federal government is a big problem because it so easily spends other people's money.

And especially here in the church, where so much depends on your generosity, I can assure you the vestry is very cautious when it comes to spending the monies you have provided.

Spending other people's money is the theme of today's parable by Jesus, a tough, even scratch your head kind of parable that has Jesus praising a crook who freely spends his master's money; and it's also the theme

of another well known parable that actually comes right before what we hear today: the parable of the prodigal son.

For reasons that are a mystery to me, the folks who put together our lectionary -- the book that has the readings appointed for each Sunday, well, those folks decided to yank the parable of the prodigal son out of order, so we heard it last March instead of last week.

Because as you know, in Luke's gospel, the parable of the unjust steward, which we heard today, comes right after the parable of the prodigal son.

Now, lest you start thinking I'm just rambling along here in search of a point, I mention all of this background because the prodigal son and the unjust steward are very much related to one another, quite connected in fact, and both get at something of the nature of God that you might find startling and even surprising.

Both the prodigal son and the unjust steward blow right through other people's money: the son wastes his dad's inheritance; the steward writes off huge amounts owed to his master.

Both the son and the steward find themselves in a real pinch: the son is broke and feeding pigs (a job equivalent to cleaning public toilets with a toothbrush) and the steward's financial shenanigans have been found out and he's about to be put out on his ear: too proud to beg, too weak to dig.



# Rector's Message, continued

Both son and steward talk to themselves about their predicament, and both come up with plans to get back in the good graces of their benefactors: the son plans to become his dad's servant; the steward is about to feather his nest with the gratitude of those whose debts he knocks down.

What I want to suggest to you is that both of these parables give us insight into an outrageous willingness of God to forgive in situations where human beings find it extraordinarily hard to forgive.

The son returns home, and dad doesn't even listen to his offer to become a hired hand: instead, a huge party is thrown, even more of dad's money is spent (some will say wasted) and the boy is made whole again.

No apologies, no promises to never pull a stunt like that again, not even a time out or probation.....

It's the older brother who stands in for most of us as he harrumphs at the sheer unfairness of it all!

The same thing happens when we take a look at the unjust steward.

Here's a cad who's been dipping into the till, which is why he's fired in the first place, and then he takes an even bigger bite out of the master's bank account by giving huge discounts to what Roy Chee and Millie Goo owe for that wheat and corn they bought last year....but instead of calling the cops and tossing the steward in the clink, the master holds him up as a brilliant success story.

With all this flying at us, you sort of need to take a step back..... and do some remembering.

One of the most serious charges of religious blasphemy leveled against Jesus is that he goes around forgiving sins, something the good religious folks say only God can do.

And, more outrageously, he goes around forgiving sins without folks even asking to be forgiven!

That's an outrage even to us today.

Our own prayer book talks about forgiveness, but for those who truly and humbly repent,....., a condition Jesus almost never imposes!

Remember the paralyzed guy lowered through the open roof by his pals so he can be at Jesus' feet?

What does Jesus say?

"Because of their faith, (he says, pointing to the boys on the roof) your sins are forgiven!"

And when the religious mucky mucks object, he raises the stakes

and tells the paralyzed fellow to get up and walk, and lo and behold, he gets up and strolls home!

Or how about the gal caught in adultery, the snarling crowd with stones in hand ready to show her some of God's justice; only to have Jesus make them face themselves, and in the facing, walk away in shame, and then turning to the woman and asking -- not if she repents, but rather, "does anyone condemn you...?"

"No one, sir," comes the answer.

"Then nor do I condemn you."

Now, if forgiveness is God's kuleana, if the right to forgive is like God's money: something only God controls, something only God can spend, where does Jesus get off spending God's money like a drunken sailor?

Unless, unless, the entire mission of Jesus is to declare God's mercy and forgiveness to everyone: and the only one's who can't get it are those who refuse to accept it.

And so, the message, it seems, of the unjust steward, is that the master has opened his bank account to all of us, the currency is forgiveness, and we are each of us encouraged to spend it as lavishly and extravagantly and endlessly as possible.

Any time you get a group of people together, either here in the church or at the Elks Club or around the picnic table at the family reunion; the question is almost never: "Who needs to forgive?"

The question is almost always: "Who doesn't need to forgive?"

We live in a world of sharp elbows; so whether it's a parent who did a rotten job parenting, a brother who did a rotten thing yesterday, or a decade ago, or a spouse who cheated, or a boss who can't seem to keep his face out of mine....well, who doesn't need to forgive?

The problem that so often comes

# Rector's Message, continued

up though is that I have such good reasons NOT to forgive: just reasons, logical reasons, respectable reasons that are unshakable and true!

And here comes Jesus, barging in to these oh so private parts of our lives, with this strange tale of the crook who is commended!

One minister puts it this way:

“What does the unjust steward do?”

The steward forgives.

He forgives things that he has no right to forgive.

He forgives for all the wrong reasons, for personal gain and to compensate for past misconduct.

So what on earth is the moral of this story.....?

Perhaps it is this, the theme that runs throughout the gospels: FORGIVE.

Forgive it all.

Forgive it now.

Forgive it for any reason you want, or for no reason at all.

We don't have to do it out of love for the other person, if we're not there yet.

We can forgive the other person because of that whole business of what we pray in Jesus' name every Sunday morning, (you know, “forgive us as we forgive.....”) and because we know we'd like forgiveness ourselves.

We can forgive because we know what it's like to live as unforgiving people, and so we know that not forgiving, (because we don't want to reward that so and so), is like me eating rat poison, hoping it will hurt the rat.

We can forgive because we are, or we want to be, connected with Jesus' power to forgive and free sinners like us.

Or we can forgive because maybe it'll help our luck on the next trip to Vegas, or maybe it'll bring some good Karma.

It all boils down to the same thing: deluded or sane, selfish or unselfish, there is no bad reason to forgive.” P. Nuechterlein (modified and paraphrased).

And it seems there may be one other lesson to be pulled from

the parables of the prodigal son and the unjust steward: and that is this: God isn't particularly interested in respectability.

We can see in the sketchy, slippery, unjust steward the very ministry of Jesus.

After all, Jesus constantly breaks the rules, eating and healing on the Sabbath; consorting with unclean riffraff, and constantly dipping his hand oh so liberally into God's stockpile of forgiveness.

In the eyes of the respectable folks, Jesus is every bit the crook as the unjust steward, and in fact, he's condemned to a crook's death, and he's laughed at and mocked by all the good folks when God doesn't save him from the cross.

But the problem with respectability is that it too often judges and condemns, and we live in a world that's drowning in judgment and condemnation.

Jesus sets that all aside.

He becomes “sin for us sinners, weak for us weaklings, lost for us losers, and dead for us dead.” Capon, Parables of Grace, 308-9.

Jesus has paid our debts, in full, and forever and completely -- and he gives each of us a key to God's bank vault; the one that is over flowing, the one that cannot be contained, the one labeled “Forgiveness;” and Jesus tells us each and every day: go ahead, spend it!

Spend it wildly!

Spend it foolishly!

Spend it for good reasons or bad reasons or for no reason at all, but spend God's wealth of forgiveness because, as Paul says to Timothy today: “this is the way our Savior God wants us to live.....!” 1 Tim. 2:3 (“The Message” tr.)

+amen

*“Minds are like parachutes. They work best when open.” —anonymous*





## The Sound of Music!



*El Sistema is a visionary global movement that transforms the lives of children through music. A new model for social change, and it's here at St. E's!*

38 years ago in a parking garage in Caracas, Dr. José Antonio Abreu gathered together 11 children to play music. **El Sistema** was born. It now teaches music to more than 500,000 of Venezuela's most vulnerable children, demonstrating the power of ensemble music to dramatically change the life trajectory of hundreds of thousands of a nation's youth while transforming the communities around them.

Now, through the efforts of Hawaii-based **Kalikolehua**, with grants from **The McInerney Foundation, Dot Mason** and the **Hawaii Community Foundation, David Nakada** and **'O'io**, and our own **Kathy and Carl Crosier**, St. Elizabeth's is on board with a world-wide program that is turning inner city kids into orchestral musicians! Hana hou!

And what a fantastic week it was with **El Sistema** getting off the ground with half the youth learning rhythm and the other half forming a choral group!



The kids so far have been exceptionally polite, well-behaved and, *dare I say it?* — nearly angelic!



## Youth News

by James Fitzpatrick

During the afternoon of Saturday September 28th, fourteen children and five adults from St. Elizabeth's Youth Outreach visited the **Polynesian Cultural Center**. At the Polynesian Cultural Center the children were able to walk through six different villages, each representing a different island in the Pacific. Samoa, Tahiti, Fiji, Aotearoa, Tonga, and Hawaii were all represented. At each village the youth learned about Polynesian life.

A few of them commented on the fact that there are many similarities between their home in Chuuk and the islands of Polynesia.

After a day of weaving, spear throwing, tattooing, dancing, and a variety of other activities the children attended the show, "Ha: Breath of Life." For many of the children this was the first professional stage performance they have ever seen, and they loved it (particularly the amazing fire dancing).

I would like to thank the chaperones that volunteered their Saturday afternoon and evening to watch the children, **Viliani Lino, Sarah Kleinschmidt,** and **Nia Ikavuka**. I would particularly like to thank **Fane Lino** for taking the time to organize this memorable event for our youth, we all very much appreciate all of the work that she does for them.



## First you take some Flour ...

*Is it pie?  
Is it cake?  
Maybe a pizza?*

*Nope!*



*Our youngsters,  
with the wit and  
wisdom of the  
dynamic Lentz duo  
... is making  
several batches ...*

*of ...*

*Voilà!  
Communion  
Bread!*

*Thanks gang!*





# Sunday School News

by Sue Yap

Since the first day of Sunday School, there have been 32 students sitting in classroom A. Not all at once, but the class size goes from 15 to 25 on any given Sunday — and include Classroom B with 8 students and **Fane Lino** in Shim Hall with 15 enrolled. The numbers for the Sunday School have certainly increased this school year— 55 students call St. Elizabeth's their Sunday School!

Thanks to **Preston Lentz** for his help with the youth and children ages 10 and up to participate with the Sunday worship service, training junior acolytes, junior lay readers, crucifers and future ushers.

As for the overflowing classroom A, it certainly is a challenge for **Miss Ajaon** to teach music using the handbells...but the children all came out of the class singing *Jesus Loves Me* a little louder and many playing the song with the handbells learning beats and notes. Everyone took on the challenge and did exceedingly well! On the 4th Sunday of each month Miss Ajaon teaches music to the children in Classroom A and they are learning songs with classroom B. The older children in Shim Hall have their music program with **Fane and Villiami Lino** on Friday afternoons. **James Fitzpatrick** is always there to lend a hand...or two!

The older Sunday School children are becoming very involved in the life of the church, not only on Sundays but throughout the week. Drop by the church and see all the activities going on during the weekdays after school. Share a few moments with the children and the adults who gather daily every afternoon.



Acolyte training session with Preston Lentz

Thanks again to our wonderful teachers who are working with the children: **Jamie Chock, Lillian Tyau, Sarah Kleinschmidt, Heather Manning, Fane Lino, Seine Lino** and **James Fitzpatrick, Preston Lentz, Ajaon Chen** and family, **Villiami Lino** and **Doris Fan**. Such wonderful mentors and great examples of an amazing ministry flourishing in Kalihi-Palama!



## Attendance

Sunday, September 1	180
Wednesday, September 4	50
Sunday, September 8	186
Wednesday, September 11	23
Sunday, September 15	175
Wednesday, September 18	17
Sunday, September 22	177
Wednesday, September 25	25
Sunday, September 29	158



*The first session of the music program got off to a great start with the ringing of the handbells! Children were 'partnered' up and learned how to hold the bell, how to ring the bell, how to clap to the beat and learn the basic 4/4 and quarter notes.*

# Born to Eternal Life

We offer our deepest sympathy and prayers to the family of **Richard Okubo** who died on September 10, 2013. May he and all the departed move from glory to glory in God's nearer presence.

*O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death, and brought life and immortality to light: Grant that your servant Richard, being raised with him, may know the strength of his presence, and rejoice in his eternal glory; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.*



# Happy Birthday

*God's blessings to those with October birthdays!*

# A Good Breakfast for a Good Start

*Which of these fellas learned . . .  
 . . .to cook in Paris?*



(Below)  
*Viliani Lino leading the St. Peter's Breakfast Club in prayer!*



Raquel Timonio	10/1
Jermic Shuru	10/1
Bernice Kau	10/2
Carole Fujishige	10/5
Rebecca Steffey	10/6
Daniel Tyau	10/8
Jamie Chock	10/8
Michelle Ramos	10/9
Inorie Eichy	10/9
Daniel Oshiro	10/9
Mia Starkman	10/9
K. O. Eichy	10/10
Fane Lino	10/11
David Kleinschmidt	10/12
Teiti Stevens	10/12
Beryl Goo	10/14
Nora Blaisdell	10/14
Rayn White	10/14
Judith Kokubun	10/15
Shigeru Awakuni	10/17
Maileen Cardenas	10/18
Kolby Batangan	10/18
Viola Arabe	10/19
Victor Noket	10/19
Elaine Amoy	10/20
Donovan Young	10/20
Jayden-Ryan Ruz	10/20
Jonson Jong	10/21
Suzanne Shak	10/21
Wynter Marlow	10/22
Dennis Akauola	10/22
Collette Arakawa	10/24
Katherine Crosier	10/24
Luciana Sarceda	10/25
Antor Raymon	10/25
Alex Nagamine	10/25
Kjirstin Propernick	10/25
Ariel Badua	10/26
Tate Anderson	10/26
Esther Tyau	10/29
RaeLynne Steffey	10/29
Betty Awakuni	10/30
Lydia Vallejo	10/30
Kris Sorcey	10/31





# Oscar Romero Prayer

It helps, now and then, to step back and take the long view.  
 The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is beyond our vision.  
 We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of  
     the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.  
 Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying  
     that the kingdom always lies beyond us.  
 No statement says all that could be said.  
     No prayer fully expresses our faith.  
 No confession brings perfection. No pastoral visit brings wholeness.  
     No program accomplishes the church's mission.  
 No set of goals and objectives includes everything.  
     This is what we are about:  
 We plant seeds that one day will grow.  
     We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future  
 promise.  
     We lay foundations that will need further development.  
 We provide yeast that produces effects beyond  
 our capabilities.  
     We cannot do everything  
 and there is a sense of liberation in realizing  
 that. This enables us to do something  
     and do it very well.  
 It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning,  
     a step along the way,  
 an opportunity for God's grace to enter and  
     do the rest.  
 We may never see the end results,  
 But there is a difference between the  
     master builder and the worker.  
 We are workers, not master builders,  
     ministers, not messiahs.  
 We are prophets of a future not our own.  
 Amen.



*In March 1980, Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador, gave his life as a martyr. He was a witness to the gospel of freedom and the presence of Christ in the poor.*


# Helping our Friends in Kenya

ICODEI is the Episcopal group that hosted Fr. David for 5 weeks in western Kenya this summer. ICODEI works with and helps support 43 micro-enterprises, small businesses started by members of poor rural communities. This month, we are raising money for a group of young women who are trying to put sheet metal on their chicken coop to keep man-sized owls from scooping up the profits at night! To cover this particular chicken coop will run \$350.00. If you are willing, send \$1, \$10 or \$25 to St. Elizabeth's for this project and we'll forward it on to the young women; every penny will go to the ladies AND it's tax deductible



## For All the Saints

Please join us for All Saints on **Sunday, November 3rd at 9:00 am.** Please print clearly the names of loved ones' names you wish to be remembered **by Sunday, October 27th** so they may be printed in our All Saints bulletin



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