

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL
440 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii
September 30, 2012

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

Call to Worship

The directions of God are plain and simple to understand.

God's reputation for mercy is twenty-four-seven, with a never ending guarantee. God's guidance is accurate, helping us discern how to speak in love. Let us all say, "God, You are my refuge, I trust in your ways!"

God, you are my refuge, I trust in your ways!

Your word is like crystal clear water for a thirsty soul. Your word directs us to hidden treasures with mercy and compassion.

With faith in Jesus, we discover our way as the people of God?

Forgiving grace cleans the soul of any wrong doing with God. We gather to celebrate every day, refreshed and alert in faith, awake and alive with joy! AMEN.

Invocation:

Look! The Lord our God comes with a Holy Spirit of truthfulness and the voice of courage is given to men and women:

O LORD, You search us and know us! You know when we sit down and when we rise up; You invite us to walk in your love and work with a spirit for justice.

You discern our thoughts from afar, and are acquainted with all our ways.

O LORD, You know our voice and speech. You come from behind and lay Your hand upon our shoulders so that we might not loose heart.

You empower us to trust in your teaching. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us;

Our vision is challenged beyond comprehension. Where could we go from Your Spirit? Or whither shall we flee from Your presence? We praise You, for You are awesome and marvelous! Come, show us all Your wonderful ways. Amen. (Psalm 139 edited)

WE SHARE THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture: (Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, and 9:20-22 NRSV): So the king and Haman went in to feast with Queen Esther. {2}On the second day, as they were drinking wine, the king again said to Esther, 'What is your petition, Queen Esther? It shall be granted you. And what is your request? Even to the half of my kingdom, it shall be fulfilled.' {3}Then Queen Esther answered, 'If I have won your favor, O king, and if it pleases the king, let my life be given me—that is my petition—and the lives of my people—that is my request. {4}For we have been sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be killed, and to be annihilated. If we had been sold merely as slaves, men and women, I would have held my peace; but no enemy can compensate for this damage to the king.' {5}Then King Ahasuerus said to Queen Esther, 'Who is he, and where is he, who has presumed to do this?' {6}Esther said, 'A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!' Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

{9}Then Harbona, one of the eunuchs in attendance on the king, said, 'Look, the very gallows that Haman has prepared for Mordecai, whose word saved the king, stands at Haman's house, fifty cubits high.' And the king said, 'Hang him on that.' {10}So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the anger of the king abated.

{20} Mordecai recorded these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus, both near and far,{21}enjoining them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar and also the fifteenth day of the same month, year by year,{22}as the days on which the Jews gained relief from their enemies, and as the month that had been turned for them from sorrow into gladness and from mourning into a holiday; that they should make them days of feasting and gladness, days for sending gifts of food to one another and presents to the poor.

Sermon: "Courage for Community – Born for a Time Like This!"

WE RESPOND IN WORD AND DEED

Call to Confession: Lord, keep us from senseless sins, from assuming we can slide past the hard work you have given us to do.

Confession: "Holy Lord, turn to me and be gracious unto me. Look upon my doubts and fears, check out my stress level, and take away all my sins. Guard my choices and my actions. Rescue me from my conflicts. Let me not be put to shame or bring disgrace before your glory. To you, Lord I declare the hidden truth of my private and public life. In you I

take refuge. You are a laser beam of hope focused on my integrity. Shine your Holy Spirit of mercy through our every heart beat as we seek your desire to work within us each day. Let me walk with the courage with which you entrust me to act according to your compassionate mercy." Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: "If a shy and silent person turns away from any wickedness they have witnessed and does what is just and right, they will save their life. Such a person will surely live." (Ezekiel 18)

Invitation to the Offering: Accept all of us and all we are. We place ourselves before the morning altar of your Holy Cross to seek your grace and serve with compassion. Amen.

Prayer of Dedication: As we pray before your altar God, we invite you to touch the lives of each of your servants here. Take the labor of our days let it bring safety and encouragement to those around us. Add our voices to the cries for peace and justice. May our hours and all the days of our lives bring refreshment to the whole human family and all creatures of this earth? As this world spins through space, anchor us in the gravity of compassion. Make us instruments of your peace echoing the forgiveness of your Holy Cross to follow where Jesus reaches out and gives new life to our community and world. Amen.