

FROM PASTOR TOM

Do Advent and Christmas Bring A Song To Your Heart?

Last week, I was down-loading several albums of favorite Christmas songs to my computer so that I could share the music with members of my family. As I copied the tracks, I could not hear the music, but the songs started to play themselves in my mind. I found myself singing along when I just read the titles. Silent Night,.. White Christmas, ..We Three Kings, ... “a holly jolly Christmas”... Away in a Manger, and on went the songs.

One way to meditate on the meaning of Christmas is to sing a favorite Christmas hymn as you drive, wait at a light, or are standing in line at the check out. Well if you have a voice like mine – maybe you should not sing out loud!

I remember a Christmas Party where we were each supposed to sing one of the lines from the “12 Days of Christmas.” When my turn came, someone offered to donate to charity if I would please cease and desist from my scratchy rendition of “geese-a-laying.” This of course encouraged me to sing louder so the donation would grow in size and significance!

The songs as I hear them in my memory and as they are sung over and over again take me back to Christmases past... memories of family and friends...decorating the tree...candlelight services...dressing up as a wandering magi...or a searching shepherd...or caroling and hearing the crunch of snow in 15 degree weather...or in Hilo’s rainfall...lining up children as angels with wings and tilted halos ...and the joy of surprise visits...hot chocolate...and once buying the very last scrawny tree on the lot at 12:30 AM on a Christmas Eve...and more than once hidden behind a white beard in a red suit, with lots of “HO-HO-HO!!!!” poured out with laughter (The best part of this is when you know them and they have no clue as to who you really are!).

The sacredness of this season comes to light in the glow of a candle in the window on a dark night as someone reads the story of Christ’s nativity. Then we start to think about children and parents and the difficult challenges of this world and how God loves us in the miracle of

every birth (our own included)! We sense God wants us to know we are not alone when all seems bleak – and the good news we receive from the life of Jesus is for sharing who we are called to be as God’s people with all people.

Now, doesn’t that all by itself put a song in the deep and silent recesses of your heart as well as your mind and make you begin to sing about the joy of shared compassion, mercy, and unconditional love come down to earth for all people– good news for all – and we have it within us, ourselves, to give it away wherever it is needed.

Go ahead, Sing the Songs of Your Advent Blessings,

Pastor Tom

How Do Your Approach Our Sanctuary at Holy Cross?

You might be surprised to learn there is a newly restored Lanikaula Street walkway entrance to our Sanctuary. Our Trustees have observed the difficulty people have had climbing over the embankment when they park on the side of Lanikaula Street, or when they walk to our church. Wanting to make the approach to our Sanctuary more “*user friendly*” for walkers and folks in wheel chairs, our trustees with the help of Karl Kawahara contracted to have a street side walkway constructed from Lanikaula through our meditation garden and the older walkway approach.

We invite you to try it out, take a stroll through the garden, or enter directly into our Sanctuary. And, please be sure to thank our Trustees and Karl for this very user friendly entrance on the street side of our Sanctuary.

“Mahalo” for a job well done.

FROM PASTOR NEIL

Invasive Species

Hawaii knows more about invasive plants and animals than anywhere else in the US. In Wisconsin, we’re fighting things like garlic mustard, buckthorn, and the emerald ash borer. Here, there are so many pests that have elbowed aside the natives to take their place. On my hike with James to Kilauea Iki, there were signs of volunteers working to combat

ginger. So much yet to do – just to keep it at bay. So it felt good to work with Karl for a few hours to cut back trees and vines (whose names I don't know) that don't belong here.

It's a parable for our lives. Things creep in that crowd out our efforts to follow Jesus. The Christmas Season is a good time to pay attention to those invasives. Were tempted to buy things for people we love – that they may not really need. We can get caught up in the celebration of shopping and lose the celebration that our Lord chose to become a vulnerable baby in order to reach out to us.

Let's be on the lookout for the small sprouts of the beautiful but pushy stuff that will try to take over our lives and our faith and our world.

Pastor Neil

STRETCH YOUR MIND

Our first series of conversations is on the calendar: Thursday mornings at 9:30 am, December 13, 20, 27. The topic is: **“Christ has given us the ministry of reconciliation.”** Where does reconciliation need to happen in our world and in Hilo? We will talk about cultural differences and discrimination. We will look at the divides in the political landscape. We will ask how to bridge the chasms of perception and opinion that separate us. And more. Several people have expressed interest. Everyone is welcome – even if you cannot attend all three sessions. Pastor Neil will be the discussion leader. Please call or email him if you plan to be there or if you have questions: 315-7181, deupreen@charter.net.

Celebrating Advent and Christmas at Holy Cross

Saturday, December 1 – AM - *Hanging of the Greens*

Come join and help decorate our sanctuary.

Sunday, December 2 – *First Sunday of Advent*
Choir Practice at 8:30 AM - Sanctuary
Sunday School at 8:45 AM – Lounge
Communion Worship at 10:00 AM

We will be joined by the Tongan, Samoan, and the Pohnpeiann congregations.
“Let Carols Ring” – 3:00 PM Concert by the Hilo Community Chorus

Monday, Dec 3 – 6:30 PM Bible Study

Wednesday, Dec 5 – 9:30 AM Bible Study

Sunday, December 9 - *Second Sunday of Advent*

Choir Practice at 8:30 AM - Sanctuary

Sunday School at 8:45 AM – Lounge

Worship at 10:00 AM

The Christmas Fund offering will be received

All-Church Meeting to elect 2013 Officers 11:15 AM

Caroling to Home Bound – 2:00 PM – followed by a shared supper at our Church's Building of Faith

Monday, Dec 10 – 6:30 PM Bible Study

Tuesday, Dec 11 – 9:00 AM Prayer Group

10:00 AM – Care Givers Support Group

Wednesday, Dec 12 – 9:30 AM Bible Study

Saturday, December 15 – 2:00 PM Messiah

Sing-A-Long Rehearsal All are welcome

Sunday, December 16 - *Third Sunday of Advent*

Choir Practice at 8:30 AM - Sanctuary

Sunday School at 8:45 AM – Lounge

Worship at 10:00 AM - *Intergenerational*

Celebration of the Music of Christmas as we are joined by the Tongan, Samoan, and the Pohnpeiann congregations.

Messiah Sing-A-Long Concert 3:00 PM with the Hilo Community Chorus

Monday, Dec 17 – 6:30 PM Bible Study

Wednesday, Dec 19 – 9:30 AM Bible Study

Sunday, December 23 - *Fourth Sunday of Advent*

Choir Practice at 8:30 AM - Sanctuary

(Sunday School break)

Worship at 10:00 AM

Monday Evening, December 24 –

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLE LIGHT SERVICE

Worship at 7:30 PM -

Pot-Luck Reception in the Building of Faith following worship.

Tuesday, December 25 – *Christmas Day*

IYAA Festivities

Wednesday, December 26 – Combined Micronesian Church Celebration

Sunday, December 30 - New Year's Sunday

Choir Practice at 8:30 AM - Sanctuary

(Sunday School break)

Worship at 10:00 AM - Hear The Bells of Christmas Ring

Consecration of the elected Church Officers for 2013

Monday, December 31 - New Year's Eve

Tuesday, January 1 - New Year's Day

TAKE A HIKE

James Yoshiyama has graciously offered to show Pastor Neil the Big Island – from a hiking point of view. We have two more dates and two destinations: Friday, November 30 – Pu'u O'o trail off Saddle Road; Friday, December 14 – Lake Waiau and the Adz Quarry on Mauna Kea (beginning at 12,000 feet). Let us know if you'd like to join in the adventures. Call Neil at the parsonage: 315-7181.

CHRISTMAS CAROLING

Christmas Caroling to visit with many of the shut-ins is scheduled for **Sunday, Dec. 9th at 2:00 pm**. Meet in the parking lot for carpooling and planned visits. We plan to be back at church in time for a light meal that will follow. All are invited, even if you can't sing a tune.

CHRISTMAS FUND

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is the primary source of annual income for the work of the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance, one of the corporations comprising the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ.

You can honor the Christ Child during this season by bringing gifts that will be used to support and honor those who have served, and are serving, this beloved church. Your gifts will truly represent the incarnational nature of the church at its best.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

The Christmas Fund provides a lifeline of hope to many lower-income active and retired clergy and lay employees in the United Church

of Christ. Due to the lingering effects of the economic recession, there have been many instances in which gifts from the Christmas Fund have made a critical difference in the lives of people living literally on the edge.

The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance and the staff of the Pension Boards are confident that through your continuing faithfulness, we will be able to provide the same level of care and compassion as has been our tradition for more than a century.

Offerings will be dedicated on December 9. Thank you for your generosity

VOLUNTEERS FOR DECEMBER

USHERS:

FLOWERS:

- 12/02 Sachie Ohata, Ruth Ohata
- 12/09 Jean Kita (Mem)
- 12/16 Beverly Dodo
- 12/23 Christmas Poinsettias (Cindy Debus)
- 12/30 Laura Ota

CHILDCARE:

- 12/02 Eric Tanouye
- 12/09 Laura Ota
- 12/16 Cindy Debus
- 12/23 Gloria Kobayashi
- 12/30 Ethel Yoshimasu

LAYREADERS:

- 12/02 Mary Ann Katayama
- 12/09 Jason Rekis
- 12/16 Margaret Torigoe
- 12/23 Bob Smith
- 12/30 Stefan Tanouye

DECEMBER PRAYER LIST: Birthday

Please pray for and send a greeting to these Birthday people

- 03 Marshall, Katy
- 04 Kawazoe, Janine
- 07 Kawata, Kiku
- Kuwaye, Glenn
- Yamada, Martha
- 08 Suzuki, Jill
- 13 Fujimoto, Alice
- Fukuda, Sachie
- 17 Hayashi, Saeko
- 18 Yokoyama, Jay
- 21 Tadaki, Lynn
- 22 Knell, Aaron
- 25 Nishida, Bessie
- Takemoto, Setsuko
- 29 Knell, Jonah

Reprinted from Home Touch

Sunday, November 11, 2012

Scripture Reading: Psalm 127

THOUGHT: A compromise is an agreement where both parties get what neither of them wanted. – Anonymous

A man observed a woman in the grocery store with a 3-year old girl in her basket. As they passed the cookie section, the child asked for cookies and her mother told her, “No.”

The little girl immediately began to whine and fuss, and the mother said quietly, “Now, Ellen, we just have half of the aisles left to go through. Don’t be upset. It won’t be long.”

He passed the mother again in the candy aisle. Of course, the little girl began to shout for candy. When she was told she couldn’t have any, she began to cry. The mother said, “There, there, Ellen! Only two more aisles to go, and then we’ll be checking out.”

The man again happened to be behind the pair at the check-out, where the little girl immediately began to clamor for gum and burst into a terrible tantrum upon discovering there would be no gum purchased today. The mother patiently said, “Ellen, we’ll be through this check-out stand in five minutes, and then you can go home and have a nice nap.”

The man followed them out to the parking lot and stopped the woman to compliment her. “I couldn’t help noticing how patient you were with little Ellen...”

The mother broke in, “My little girl’s name is Tammy... I’m Ellen.”

I wonder if God feels that way sometimes about his children, you and me. Sometimes I think I can hear God talking to himself, giving himself a pep talk, trying to be patient with the likes of children like me.

Today I’m going to try to be a good boy so that God can have a good day, “go home and have a nice nap.” Wouldn’t it be great if we could all go easy on God with our complaining and whining, so God could just rest a bit from having to deal with us?! - Timothy Merrill
Prayer: Patient God, thank you for loving me and staying with me even though I know I must exasperate you from time to time! In Jesus’ name. Amen.

BRAIN TEST:

Good example of a Brain Study: If you can read this OUT LOUD you have a strong mind. And better than that: Alzheimer’s is a long, long, way down the road before it ever gets anywhere near you...

7H15 M3554G3
53RV35 7O PROV3
HOW OUR M1ND5 C4N
DO 4M4Z1NG 7H1NG5!
1MPR3551V3 7H1NG5!
1N 7H3 B3G1NN1NG
17 WA5 H4RD BU7
NOW, ON 7H15 LIN3
YOUR M1ND 1S
R34D1NG 17
4U70M471C4LLY
W17H 0U7 3V3N
7H1NK1NG 4B0U7 17,
B3 PROUD! ONLY
C3R741N P30PL3 C4N
R3AD 7H15.

“This message serves to prove how our minds can do amazing things! Impressive things! In the beginning it was hard but now, on this line your mind is reading it automatically with out even thinking about it, be proud! Only certain people can read this”

Only great minds can read this. This is weird, but interesting!

If you can raed this, you have a sgtrane mnid, too. Can you raed this? Olny 55 plepoe out of 100 can. I cdnuolt blveiee that I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd what I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the hmuan mnid, aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mtaetr in what oerdr the ltteres in a word are, the olny iproamtnt tihng is that the frsit and last ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can still raed it whotuit a pboerlm. This is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the word as a wlohe. Azanmig huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghuhot slpeling was ipmorantt!

Even if you are not old, you will find this interesting...

Short Neurological Test

1- Find the C below...

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2- If you already found the C, now find the 6 below.

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99
99
99

3 - Now find the N below.. It's a little more difficult.

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MM
MM
MM
MM
MM

This is NOT a joke. If you were able to pass these 3 tests, you can cancel your annual visit to your neurologist. Your brain is great and you're far from having a close relationship with Alzheimer's.

Reprinted from Home Touch

Sunday, December 2, 2012

Scripture Reading: 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

THOUGHT: Hope is definitely not the same thing as optimism. It is not the conviction that something will turn our well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out.

- Vaclav Havel

Today is the First Sunday of Advent. Today we begin to prepare for the "coming" (thus the word "advent") of the Christ Child.

The first candle of the Advent wreath that is

lit on this Sunday stands for HOPE. In succeeding Sundays we shall learn more about PEACE, JOY and LOVE.

What is hope? One definition says that "Hope is the emotional state which promotes the belief in a positive outcome related to events and circumstances in one's life."

Hope is one of the graces the apostle Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 13: "Now abides faith, hope and love." Hope is so important for us to have. Can we ever truly live without hope? I'm not too sure. Without hope, we tend to give up. We withdraw into our little world, shutter the blinds and close our minds, our spirit withers and our joy evaporates.

Cheer up! Christ is coming. Christ will be born. God will be – and now is, of course – among us! We can therefore have hope and hope gives us courage. In Job 11:18, it says, "You will have courage because you will have hope." This means that we don't have to fear the days ahead, but instead look forward to them with eagerness. We do not need to wallow in our doubts or worries, but stand firm and strong and stay rooted in God's sacred and holy word. Bear in mind that God is the Author of Hope.

Indeed, God knows what we need and God will provide those things when the time is right. God knows what is best for us. Of that we can be sure. Of that we can hope.

- Timothy Merrill

PRAYER: God of hope, thank you for giving us every reason to continue to have hope. Thank you for being with us through every crisis and every trial. Thank you for sending Jesus. Amen.