

**CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS**  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL  
440 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii  
December 23, 2012  
FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

**WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD**

**Call to Worship**

Christ Connects Us to the Poor and the Oppressed in the Spirit of Ha'aha'a

Reader One: Luke 1:39-50

Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for our Creator has looked with favor on the lowliness of this servant. Surely from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is the name of God. Marvelous mercy is for those who fear God from generation to generation."

Reader Two: Luke 1:51-55 "The Lord has shown the strength of compassion and the power of justice; the proud are scattered and lost in the thoughts of their hearts. The powerful are brought down from their thrones, and the lowly are lifted up; the hungry are filled with good things, and the rich sent away empty. The Holy One helps his people, in remembrance of mercy, according to the promises made to our ancestors, to Abraham and his descendants forever."

Reader One: Christ, Light of the World, connects the poor and the oppressed to God's Aloha in the Spirit of Ha'aha'a.

Reader Three: Today we light the fourth Advent candle, symbolizing the Spirit of Ha'aha'a, the Hawaiian word for humility. "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth," remembering how Jesus himself taught his followers on the mountainside.

**People: God of justice and righteousness, make us instruments to connect the meek and the lowly to your divine Aloha.**

Reader Three: We have been made aware of the suffering and injustice in our communities and in the world at large. May our sensitivity increase to the needs of our sisters and brothers—to those who experience pangs of hunger on a regular basis; who walk the streets without a place to call home; and who feel rejected by society.

Reader One: Like Mary, mother of Jesus, may the Spirit of Ha'aha'a, humility intertwined with firm determination, inspire us to take our place among the lowly and oppressed and to work for the day when God's reign of Aloha will prevail in the world.

**People: Merciful God, help us to get up from our places of comfort and safety and to go where you can use us to demonstrate the inclusiveness of your divine Aloha.**

### **WE SHARE THE WORD OF GOD**

**Scripture:** (Luke 1:46-55) And Mary said,  
I'm bursting with God-news;  
I'm dancing the song of my Savior God.  
God took one good look at me, and look what happened—  
I'm the most fortunate woman on earth!  
What God has done for me will never be forgotten,  
the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others.  
His mercy flows in wave after wave  
on those who are in awe before him.  
He bared his arm and showed his strength,  
scattered the bluffing braggarts.  
He knocked tyrants off their high horses,  
pulled victims out of the mud.  
The starving poor sat down to a banquet;  
the callous rich were left out in the cold.  
He embraced his chosen child, Israel;  
he remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high.  
It's exactly what he promised,  
beginning with Abraham and right up to now. — The Message

**Sermon:** "What does Mary See?"

Pastor Neil Deupree

### **WE RESPOND IN WORD AND DEED**

**Call to Confession:** In the stillness of the night, Christ is born among us. Flesh of our flesh – he bears our suffering as one acquainted with our grief. By love and faith will the Lord's Holy Spirit give us the blessings of hope. Do not be afraid, for unto us a child is born. And he shall save all people from their sins, by holy mercy, joy, and grace. Now, this event enters

our human experience and our spiritual identity. We are called to be God's forgiving people for our generation, and to every generation. Thanks be to God.

**Confession:** God, heal the wounds of war and anger in this world. Visit with grace families who suffer distress and grief. May we work with your compassion to remove the barriers of hunger, homelessness, unemployment, addiction, and lack of education. Visit us with mercy as your child seeks to be born in our hearts. Remind us to love others as you love us. Enable us to be creators of peace in our homes, in our Hilo community, in our state and nation, and around this world. Come among us in the face of every child and adult. Reach out and grab our hand with the grip of faith. Redeeming God, meet us as we turn every corner in life. Heal our souls with courage to show compassion. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon:** A child has become a prophet of the most high God, and he gives wisdom with salvation to his people. Amen.

**Invitation to the Offering:** From the far corners of society, and from distant lands, people seek to live and care for our world with the wisdom and passion of Jesus. Each of us is blessed with special gifts of the Spirit. We can see the Christ Child in the lives of those around us if we but look. Let us find it within us to offer the abundance of God's grace to encourage one another in faith as we ourselves have been blessed.

**Prayer of Dedication:** Lord of Heaven and Earth – God of time and space - we welcome Your embracing and ever loving power to bless the earth, this holy Advent season. May Your glory shine as praise is sung by angel voices. May peace on earth be treasured in the center of our souls. Let the gifts we offer bless all people through the mission and ministry of your church to bring hope, joy, comfort, love, and peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, with grace from your Holy Spirit, Amen.