

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL
440 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii
January 20, 2013
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

Call to Worship

Leader: In the beginning when God spoke, creation came into being, the words that formed us were “Let there be...” and God said “It is very, very complete!”

People: Work in us God, so that we have the grace to speak creative words of celebration for the glory of your love. Make us one with every nation and all people. Bless us with courage to reconcile any differences through our Lord Jesus, now, and forever.

Leader: When Christ entered the world, God walked among us. Amazingly in our time, God is still speaking and walking into our lives. We ourselves are called to be disciples in the struggle between peace and injustice, between forces of joyous mercy and the forces of fear, between violence and prejudices. God enters us to heal any isolation with the power to share grace and love.

ALL: Come, Holy Creator, let us venture forth each day in your sacred footsteps. Let us honor the sanctity of human hope. Let us prepare a home for you in our community, in our families, and wherever we are. Grant us character to love you and each person as you love us, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

Invocation: O yes, God, pour out your Holy Spirit. Regenerate our spirits from the inside out and the outside in! Flow into each of us on this amazing journey of life. Fill our desire to embrace Jesus and his wisdom as we work for a world community secure for all people. Let His guidance coach us with courage and kindness. Inspire us to trust your forgiveness when we face difficult and demanding challenges. Now, embrace us to share in your friendship wherever we are, day by day, in the weeks ahead. Help us reach out and touch with hope the lost and lonely. With love we greet you, God of all. Amen

WE SHARE THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture: John 2:1-11 - **The Wedding in Cana**

¹ Two days later there was a wedding in the town of Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, ² and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine had given out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They are out of wine." ⁴ "You must not tell me what to do," Jesus replied. "My time has not yet come." ⁵ Jesus' mother then told the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ The Jewish people have rules about ritual washing, and for this purpose six stone water jars were there, each one large enough to hold between twenty and thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to the servants, "Fill these jars with water." They filled them to the brim, ⁸ and then he told them, "Now draw some water out and take it to the man in charge of the feast." They took him the water, ⁹ which now had turned into wine, and he tasted it. He did not know where this wine had come from (but, of course, the servants who had drawn out the water knew); so he called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone else serves the best wine first, and after the guests have drunk a lot, he serves the ordinary wine. But you have kept the best wine until now!" ¹¹ Jesus performed this first miracle in Cana in Galilee; there he revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

Sermon: "Better than Expected – Extravagant Blessings"

WE RESPOND IN WORD AND DEED

Call to Confession: I do not want you uninformed about spiritual gifts. You once gave into the status quo – enticed by the market economy, interest rates, the newest fads in cars, computers, college degrees, and the prestige of a home address, or the influence of your profession – all idols of the market place. These really say nothing about character! Your character is shaped by faith in Christ – who first loved you – even when you felt unloved – and now wants you to love with immeasurable extravagant grace and forgiveness.

Confession: God of all the ages, you have revealed your grace in our Savior, Jesus Christ. We confess our doubts and our mistakes in our relationships – help us heal our divisions and any quick judgments. As we wait patiently for your mercies, strengthen us to live in your justice without prejudice. Help us see ourselves and others honestly without fear or suspicion. Where we are weak, strengthen us with courageous mercy and your holy forgiveness. Open our hearts that we may accomplish your will, through Christ who guides the way to life everlasting. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon: I would like to think of each of you as an extremist - in the light of the spirit which made Jesus an extremist for love. Compassionate love is the only redeeming force on earth which can be dispensed and received without any harm to the one who gives and the one who receives. If the Son of God makes you free, you will be free indeed (- in all your deeds) Amen." (Based on words by MLK, Jr.)

Invitation to the Offering: As we stand before God today, I call upon us not to be disengaged spectators, but become energized participants. Let us be among the first responders to human need. In this great opportunity of life, we can give from the abundance we have been given. Let it be our best. Let us trust to God to bring us grace with charity for the fullness of hope and service by the Holy Spirit. Amen

Prayer of Dedication: God, from you every thought and action can bless us with kindness and lead us to peace. Cultivate in our hearts the love which leads to reconciliation. Help us to fulfill your mission by sharing generously wherever there is need. May we see the resources you have brought into our lives as your invitation to act wisely in showing how much we love you, even as you love us. By your Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Benediction:

***“Sha-lom, my friends, sha-lom, my friends, sha-lom, sha-lom.
We’ll see you a-gain, we’ll see you a-gain. Sha-lom, sha-lom.
Sha-lom, my friends, sha-lom, my friends, sha-lom, sha-lom.”***