

CHURCH OF THE HOLY CROSS
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST – CONGREGATIONAL
440 West Lanikaula Street, Hilo, Hawaii
April 14, 2013
Third Sunday of Easter

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD

Responsive Call to Worship

Leader: We want to live in new times, Lord, we want to see flourishing signs of hope. We want to put the pieces of our lives together and shape our days with forgiveness.

People: We cry for a spirit of cooperation and unity. We ask for the enemies of the world to become partners in peace. Let the four corners, and the continents of the earth hear the voice of peace with a call to end violence.

Leader: Flash your transforming Spirit into every dimension of our experience. Turn the ordinary into our opportunities to affirm each other as extra-ordinary and super special. Let us knowingly act so that each person can change for the good of the world. We celebrate God's goodness.

ALL: Let a new wind blow to fill us with desire, strength, mercy and compassion. You created us to be one. May we willingly go into strange places and heal the blindness of the world with visions of hope. Call us and send us God! We are your's! AMEN.

Amen.

Invocation: Holy Presence of our Living God, move on the highways we travel. Sit beside us in air planes, movie theaters, and class rooms. Stand beside us in shopping lines. Idle in the cars beside us at stop signs and red lights. Walk in front of us as we step into the cross walks. Exercise beside us as we touch our toes and lift out heads, and wave our arms. Be with us in the breaking of bread at meals and the washing of vegetables. Speak to us in the voices of those who surround us. May the natural sounds of your Creation be songs that refresh our souls? Come Holy God, come as the Spirit of truth, the fountain of love, and the power to renew and shape us with your forgiving joy in Christ Jesus. Amen

WE SHARE THE WORD OF GOD

Gospel Lesson: Acts 9:1-6

Saul breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the assembly in Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Now, as he was approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

The men who were traveling with Saul stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. Three days he was without sight.

Now, there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come and lay hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; and I hear he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name."

The Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel. I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

So Ananias went, entered the house, and laid his hands on Saul and said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogue saying, "Jesus is the Son of God!"

Sermon *"Way Forward – Stepping Out"*

WE RESPOND IN WORD AND DEED

Confession: (Responsive) *(From the Paradoxical Commandments – Kent Keith)*

Leader: People are illogical, unreasonable, and self centered.

People: Let us love them anyway! Lord, hear our Prayers.

Leader: The good you do today, may be forgotten tomorrow!

People: Let us do good anyway! Lord, hear our Prayers.

Leader: If you try your best, you and others may still make mistakes!

People: Let us give the world our best anyway, Lord, hear our prayers.

Leader: People may really need our help but we may be criticized for helping them.

ALL: Let us help people anyway! God of grace and love, hear our Prayers. Teach us to be a community of peace and nonviolence. Show us how to overcome aggression with words of kindness and acts of justice. Grant us patience, understanding, and compassion. In Jesus' name, Amen

(This section Offered by the Justice and Witness Ministries United Church of Christ.)

Assurance of Pardon: Blessed are you when you can show people how to cooperate and help one another rather than compete or resort to violence. That is when you discover who you really are, and you will have a place in God's family. Amen

Invitation to the Offering: The word became flesh and dwelt among us. We have seen this glory, the glory of the one and only Son who came from the Parent of all Creation full of grace and truth. Now, let us in the same way, as followers of Christ Jesus, dwell with all creation having received the gift of our labors and been blessed with every capacity for mercy to share life in all our fullness. Amen

Prayer of Dedication (Unison): Receive each of us, God, and send us to the places where we can serve you to our fullest and our best. Let us touch human hearts and heal the wounds of our world so that no person of any age feels lost or alone. Comfort and confront us all in the shadow of your Holy Cross so that we extend our hospitality and our resources with healing compassion in the name of Christ – send us into the world. Amen.