Mahalo to the authors and artists who have contributed to “Open the Heart.” This volume contains works by:

- G. Robert Smith
- Evonne Shioshita
- Anne Sadayasu
- Mikael Leung
- Esther Kodani
- Gloria Kobayashi
- Eric Anderson

Series Editor: Eric Anderson
Layout and Support: Momi Lyman

This devotional is a 2019 publication of Church of the Holy Cross United Church of Christ in Hilo, Hawai‘i. All contributors retain copyright of their original works.

Church of the Holy Cross
United Church of Christ
440 West Lanikaula Street
Hilo, Hawai‘i 96720
808-935-1283
www.holycrosshilo.com

Volume 1
March 6, 2019 - March 17, 2019
Open the Heart

The Bible uses the word “heart” 727 times – at least, it does in the New Revised Standard Version translation. It is often a metaphor for affection, or for will and commitment, or for courage. In his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 6:11-13), the Apostle Paul declared that his heart was open wide to the people of that church. “In return,” he wrote, “I speak as to children – open your hearts also.”

This Lent, we seek to open our hearts. Closed, they neither give nor receive love. Closed, they leave us uncommitted and purposeless. Closed, we cannot reach into our courage to do our work.

Open hearts, however, beat with power. With an open heart, we find the strength to face the challenges and obstacles of living lovingly within the world. With an open heart, we hold to our convictions despite the distracting forces of the day. With an open heart, we love in word and action – and we can accept the love returned.

Members and friends of Church of the Holy Cross United Church of Christ in Hilo, Hawai’i, have contributed these reflections. Some are prose, some are poetry, some are photographs, some are drawings. You will find the fresh imagination of keiki and the seasoned experience of kupuna. You will find thinking honed by education and you will find the unencumbered dance of new encounters with the Spirit.

In short, you will find a wide range of people bringing their wisdom, spirit, knowledge and heart.

May their gifts help you to open your own heart... wide.

Eric Anderson, Pastor
February, 2019

Sunday, March 17

Psalm 27:3

Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war rise up against me, yet I will be confident.

Really? “My heart shall not fear” when there’s a great big mob of hostile strangers at the door? I don’t know about you, but in that situation I anticipate a heart racing with terror, encouraging my legs to race even faster.

That is, if my heart sees only the danger; if my heart has screened away other things it might perceive. My heart might not be totally closed, but it might be overly focused. Samuel Johnson said, “Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates his mind wonderfully.”

The Psalmist testifies to a heart open to more than the dangers before him, a heart aware of, even anticipating, the intervention of God. With this openness comes strength. With this openness comes possibility. With this openness comes courage.

Prayer:

In stress and strife, O God, help my heart to see, to hear, to feel your presence. In your presence, Holy One, may I understand the possibilities. Amen.

Eric Anderson
Friday, March 15
What is the heart but the delight of a child’s imagination?
*Mikael Leung, age 5*

Saturday, March 16
F.R.O.G.
Fully.
Rely.
On.
God... and each day God grants you another day of Life, embrace it with Gratitude as your Attitude — each day.
*Evonne Shioshita*

Wednesday, March 6: Ash Wednesday

Joel 2:12-13a
Yet even now, says the LORD, return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your clothing.

In our day, customs change rapidly. I don’t do many things my parents routinely did. My children have abandoned some of the habits I taught them. Sometimes that’s for the better; sometimes that’s for the worse.

In contrast, the Hebrew people maintained some customs for centuries, including the practice of tearing their clothing to show great emotion. They tore their clothes for grief, they tore their clothes in anger, and they tore their clothes to show great remorse. Fabric was too precious to do this often. The ragged edges betrayed the depth of their sorrow, rage, or penitence.

Speaking for God, Joel urged his hearers to tear open their hearts instead. He saw a people who had set God aside, and it was not their clothing serving as a barrier. No, it was the boundaries of their hearts. Open that, said God: and let Me in.

Prayer:
As we begin this Lenten season of our lives, O God, we hear you call to us. We know you wish to enter our hearts. Where they are hard, help us soften them. Where they are a barrier, help us open them. Then, Holy One, please: come in. Amen.
*Eric Anderson*
Thursday, March 7

When I was a child, I called my grandmothers “Obachan” and “Apo” based on my ancestral lineage. My children called their grandmothers “Grandma.” Now my grandchildren call me “Grandma,” “Grammy,” and even “Gramsicles.” All are names of respect and even a bit of humorous love!

But what we call someone is not as important as what we do to show our love and respect for them: a person who has invested much time and effort to teach you life’s lessons and the values needed to be successful and a contributing member of society.

How does this all happen? Although my grandparents were not Christians, they believed in a higher power which guided their lives. They prayed daily and we watched them live their lives dedicated to being humble, respectful, and loyal. Through their example we learned to be caring, sharing people, to work hard and to be the best one could be. We saw that consequences resulted from one’s actions.

Today, we live in a different society. All that we can do for our grandchildren is set an example of what a “good” person is and does. They are always watching, listening, and learning! We need to be constantly aware of what we show them. They are like sponges, taking in everything that is going on around them. We need to show them that following God’s teachings will always be the way.

Praise be to God!

Anne Sadayasu

Thursday, March 7

years. I gave her a hug and thanked her. She was at peace, resting comfortably on her right side.

My sisters, brother, and I cared for her for one and a half years at home with help from CNAs. I commuted to Kauai every 6-7 months and spent 4-5 days preparing her meals, doing the laundry, and just spending time with her.

Early evening on a Monday she left us.

Esther Kodani

Thursday, March 14

( Inspired by Philippians 3:4-6)

Look at all my treasures, God, my treasures of the heart!
Look at all this wealth of love that’s fallen on me like the Hilo rain!
Loving parents, faithful church, inspiring friends, brilliant teachers, even a clarion call from You to take a place as Your disciple.

Yet… my soul is never filled completely, nor my heart as wide as You or I would wish. I struggle on still willing but uncertain.

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.” (Philippians 3:12)

Eric Anderson
him, he urges them above all to seek wisdom and understanding (which can also be interpreted as insight) to guide them through life — walking firmly in righteousness and avoiding the path of wickedness.

Embracing wisdom and understanding is also basic to his admonition to “keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” Another way we could express this, from the New English Bible, is “Guard your heart more than any treasure, for it is the source of all life.”

“Keeping” (or “guarding”) our hearts doesn’t mean closing them or hardening them. In fact, that would be the opposite of wisdom. Closing off or damming up the springs of life would be fatal to our spiritual wellbeing. Hardening of the spiritual arteries wouldn’t be any better. Instead, opening ourselves to the guidance of wisdom and understanding should lead us to the places and situations where our open heart is most needed.

Prayer:

Loving source of wisdom and understanding, fill our hearts and open us to share your bounty like ever-flowing streams. Amen.

G. Robert Smith

Wednesday, March 13

“A Hug, A Kiss”

My mom was in a nursing home. One day while lying in her bed, she called to me. I leaned close to hear her. She hugged me, planted a kiss on my right cheek, looked at me, smiled, closed her eyes and fell asleep. My eyes welled with

Friday, March 8

Rock flows, then hardens.
How can we keep our hearts from becoming stone?

Eric Anderson

Saturday, March 9

Ecclesiastes 3:1

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

Could this be the season to open the heart?

There is a season for everything else, says the Preacher, from birth to death, from planting to reaping. No doubt there are seasons for closing the heart: for protecting the fragility of love, for sheltering the delicacy of purpose, for preserving the seeds of courage. We cannot always face the storms. Sometimes we must prepare. Sometimes we must heal.

As you read the words and examine the images of this devotional, ask: Which season is this? A season to recover and renew? Or a season to share and declare?

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.

Prayer:

What season is this, O God? Amen.

Eric Anderson
Sunday, March 10

Open My Heart

Open my heart, Lord,
Open my heart
Speak to me through the blowing wind
Answer my prayer.

Open my heart, Lord
Open my heart
Speak to me through the raging storm
Bring me peace.

Open my heart, Lord
Open my heart
Speak to me through the majesty of Mauna Kea
Bless our earth.

Open my heart, Lord
Open my heart
Speak to me through the good deeds of others
Inspire me to action.

Open my heart, Lord
Open my heart
Speak to me through a still small voice
Guide me with your Spirit.

Gloria Kobayashi

Monday, March 11

Eric Anderson

Tuesday, March 12

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

There’s a tendency in popular culture to treat the heart and mind as separate and distinct, and often in conflict. “My head tells me A, but my heart tells me B,” has become a cliché of songs and story lines. Should I go with the familiar, unexciting person I can always rely on, or the risky, exciting rebel who makes my heart pound?

I don’t think the writer of Proverbs sees it quite that way. Admonishing his children with his own father’s counsel to