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

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- Anne Sadayasu
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- Mikael Leung
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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, Hawaiʻi, 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

Luke 15:2

And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Honestly? I don’t want to eat with sinners either.

I am, you see, a Nice Person. I do the Right Things. I go to Church every Sunday (granted, I am the Pastor). I raised my children to Do Good. I spend my time with Kind Friends.

Sinners, I grant you, might have more fun than I do, but we don’t share the same concerns. We don’t have the same values. We’ll either have little to say to each other, or we’ll argue. What value is there in that?

No, I don’t want to eat with sinners. Mind you, relatively few of them want to eat with me.

How odd that Jesus found something in common with those first-century sinners. Enough in common to make the time for them, to listen to them talk story, to spin out a parable or two and tell a joke over a cup of wine. Jesus found more than enough in common with these “sinners” to share a meal.

If I opened my heart, perhaps I would, too.

Prayer:
Crack open my frozen Nice Person heart, O God. Let some love pour in. Amen.

Eric Anderson
we learned that there was a higher order to life than ourselves. So, we started by attending Vacation Bible School - marching daily around Lincoln Park and learning about God! Little did I know that this would lead to my being baptized and joining the church as a senior in high school.

While in college, I attended Church of the Crossroads in Honolulu with my dorm mother and was introduced to a liberal church setting. While at University of Illinois I was totally part of the minority, another new experience. But I got to experience spring – blooming flowers and green shoots, after slipping on icy sidewalks during the winter. My life was influenced by nature, too! I had not realized how lucky I was to live in Hawai‘i!

Life as a wife and mother also taught me to be flexible and to look for the good in things. My husband’s mother, a housewife raised in Japan, did everything for her sons. My parents both worked, so the whole family shared doing the chores. Our boys and their Dad learned very quickly to help and do their part. I have sisters and then only had sons – what a new experience! But we always managed to work things out – sharing, caring and loving.

Now I get to share experiences with my grandchildren, filling a new role in my life, but always enjoying it, all through the grace of God for which I am most thankful!

*Anne Sadayasu*

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**Monday, March 18**

*Philippians 4:7*

> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

When my mother was given a terminal diagnosis, she opted to forego curative treatment. At age 83, she was at complete peace with her decision. As a family, we bravely chose to honor her choice although it meant that we would lose our beloved matriarch.

I moved in with her, and shortly before she died she confessed that she was afraid and didn't want to sleep alone. I crawled under the covers with her and confessed that I was afraid too. The thought of living in a world without her terrified and saddened me beyond measure.

The night of her death I was awakened by her movements; she was attempting to walk while in a supine position, taking “air steps” and attempting to reach out for someone or something. I gently asked her what she needed and she responded that she was going home and that I needed to stay behind. I let her know that it was okay for her to go home and that we would be okay; I thanked her for the love, kindness, patience, and devotion she had given to us and reassured her that we would always love her. She said nothing; she was too busy preparing to return “home.”

Knowing what was happening I sat silently beside her. Finally, her body arched upwards as if she were being lifted by an unseen presence; she pointed to the ceiling, smiled, and sighed. Her body relaxed and settled into a peaceful position. Thy will be done.

Although I was alone, it was close to midnight and the
room filled with an everlasting calmness and peace that let me know that I was not alone; I felt the warmth of pure love embrace me as I stared at the shell that was once my mommy.

I felt God’s presence by my side surely as night follows day.

Grief and loss scrub your heart raw, and yet: the heart heals.

*Anonymous*

**Tuesday, March 19**

I cannot heal the things I would heal, not even in Christ who gives me strength.

I have prayed to heal these things, swearing by Christ to give others strength.

This dust, that dust, needs healing. O Christ, heal my weakness.

*Eric Anderson*

**Friday, March 29**

When the droplets of your grace fall upon me, O God, will my heart be open to receive them?

*Eric Anderson*

**Saturday, March 30**

Did you ever stop to think about what happened in your life that has resulted in who you are today? I did and the list of remembrances is just overwhelming!

World War II was a horrible event, but because of it, I was introduced to Church of the Holy Cross. While he was a soldier serving in Italy my father met Reverend Yamada, who was our minister after the war. He invited us to church.

My Buddhist paternal grandfather gave us his blessings to attend the Christian Church as he felt it was important that
Thursday, March 28

2 Corinthians 4:16  
So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.

We don’t lose heart? Oh.

Sometimes I feel like somebody forget to tell me that…

The simple truth is that life can be hard. It can be sad. It can be downright terrible. I don’t think any one of us has been able to avoid that. I don’t think very many of us are under any illusions that we’ll be able to avoid that for the rest of our lives.

Our outer nature is wasting away. That may well include our physical heart.

There may be no higher spiritual need than to open the heart – the heart of our soul – to Paul’s parallel assertion. “Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day.” With a closed heart, it could be true, but we would never know it. With a closed heart, it could be true, but we would never appreciate it.

With an open heart, the renewal of our inner nature becomes clear. Its shape becomes visible. Its power becomes manifest. Its fruits are courage, resilience, endurance, peace, love.

An open heart does not lose heart.

Prayer:
Renew my inner nature, O God, day by day. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Wednesday, March 20

Can a heart be braver than a cut flower that opens and blossoms?

Eric Anderson

Thursday, March 21

Deuteronomy 26:16  
This very day the Lord your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart.

In recent weeks, we, the people of the United States, experienced the consequences of a partial government shutdown, the result of the insistent request for a border wall. The reasons for keeping the immigrants from Central and South America from entering our country are invalid and judgmental.

Were it not for the many immigrants who came and settled in North America, what would the face of America look like today?
One hundred fifty years ago, the first group of immigrants, the Gannenmono, arrived from Japan to the shores of our islands. While these immigrants were not escaping from political unrest, they were seeking economic security and stability. These immigrants, along with other ethnic groups, helped shape the Hawai‘i of today.

The Church of the Holy Cross continues to celebrate and honor its long history and gives thanks to those early immigrants who founded our church more than 125 years ago.

While we celebrate our heritage, let us continue to open our hearts and declare that we are an Open and Affirming Church. It will be a pronouncement of who we are!

Let us open our hearts!

Janet Fujioka

Friday, March 22

An open heart doesn’t require that many fingers to wave hello... but it helps.

Mikael Leung, age 5
disciples at the Last Supper before they depart for Gethsemane. He has been telling them about what is soon to happen to him. In a little while, he says, they will no longer see him. They will weep and mourn — while the world, on the other hand, will rejoice. They will suffer pain. And yet, he promises, in just a little while longer they will see him again. The pain in their hearts will turn to unquenchable joy.

Not surprisingly, they’re not getting it. We can’t really blame them, since at that point they don’t know what the next few days will hold. The pain of Judas’ betrayal, Peter’s denial, Jesus’ agonizing death, and hiding behind locked doors in fear of the authorities is still to come.

But Mary’s joyful reunion with the risen Jesus by the empty tomb, his unexpected appearance to his disciples in the locked room, the Emmaus road encounter, and the giving of the Holy Spirit are also still to come.

Jesus’ promise to them will be fulfilled. Their hearts will rejoice, and that joy and hope will be at the heart of the message we continue to proclaim and celebrate twenty centuries later.

Prayer:

Loving God, in the midst of pain may we yet open our hearts to the hope that joy will return even as it did for Jesus’ followers so long ago.

G. Robert Smith
Tuesday, March 26

Psalm 39:4
   Lord, let me know my end,
   and what is the measure of my days;
   let me know how fleeting my life is.

The salmonfly, they say, lives just a month or so.
The honu swims its dance for eighty years or more.
High in the hills of California stand the knotted stems
of bristlecones: millennia their span of life.

No salmonfly am I, nor yet a bristlecone.
I’ve passed my month. Methuselah himself
ne’er dreamed of singing o’er a thousand flames.
It is the honu that I understand the best.

Yet may I learn some wisdom from all three:
to stand in craggy dignity upon the hill;
to fly as eagerly as each day were my last;
to dance beneath the flowing ripples of my time.

Eric Anderson

Wednesday, March 27

John 16:22
   So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your
   hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

It’s a pretty safe bet that all of us have known pain not
once, but many times in our lives. It’s also a safe bet that
we’ve experienced many types and levels of pain: physical,
psychological, emotional, and spiritual.

In this passage from the Gospel of John, Jesus speaks to his

Saturday, March 23

Psalm 63:5-6
   My soul is satisfied as with a rich feast,
   and my mouth praises you with joyful lips
   when I think of you on my bed,
   and meditate on you in the watches of the night...
Sunday, March 24

Isaiah 55:1-2

Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.

“Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread?” This is a good question, isn’t it?

Most people work hard to eat – and many that no longer have a daily job worked hard for the retirement income that now pays for their meals. It simply makes sense to use that hard-earned cash for things that nourish.

We know, however, that many people – many Americans – spend their money for what does not satisfy. Dieticians bemoan the American diet, high in sugars and salts. The Blue Zones Project stresses fruits and vegetables, prepared with fewer preservatives, as part of their program to reduce risk for cancers and heart disease.

We might ask as well about the money we spend on emotional, intellectual, and spiritual things that do not satisfy. I know too well the numbing sensation of most entertainment. Yes, it helps me “down shift,” (another Blue Zones element), but does it help to heal the stresses, or actually feed my soul?

However wealthy we may be, we have only so many dollars – and more importantly, only so much time – to spend nourishing both our bodies and our spirits. As you sit to the table, or rise to work, or sit before the television, or step into the day, ask:

Is this nourishment that satisfies me, heart, body, mind, and soul?

Prayer:

Holy One, help me truly nourish myself in heart, body, mind, and soul. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Monday, March 25

Oh, My Papa

When he retired from Delite Bakery, my dad visited me, solo. Mom always accompanied him. I can’t recall dad traveling alone ever.

We spent three days together, just dad and I. It was a wonderful visit.

He departed for Honolulu on the first flight on Aloha Airlines. From the waiting room, he took the escalator to the second floor. He turned to look at me, waved goodbye and smiled. I waved back with tears in my eyes.

What a glorious morning. Etched in my heart, dad and I.

Esther Kodani