



Fill the Heart

Mahalo to the authors and artists who have contributed to "Fill the Heart." This volume contains works by:

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A Daily Devotional for Lent

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Fill the Heart

We often think of Lent as a time to empty ourselves. Indeed, this is a time to shed unnecessary burdens like destructive habits, selfish decisions, and distracted thinking. Emptiness is not a goal in itself. The space made available by discarding those sins and distractions begs to be filled, and filled this time with love, wonder, and joy. Easter begs us to reach it with a heart that is full.

How can you fill your heart? In many ways, I hope and pray. I hope and pray that this devotional provides you with another one. Certainly the levels of my heart have been rising as I read and viewed the reflections and artwork. I will never hear the phrase, "I got more red paint!" in the same way again. It will always make me smile.

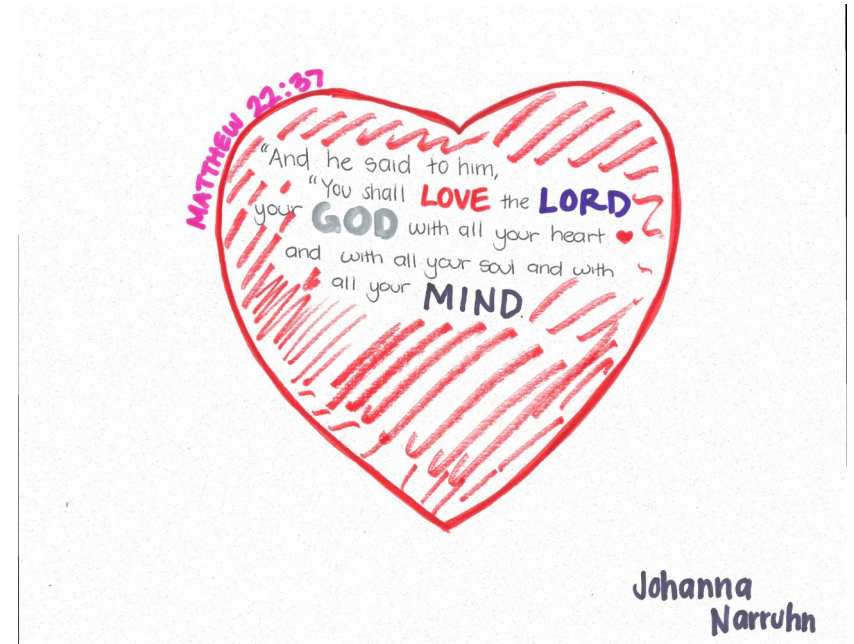
Members and friends of Church of the Holy Cross United Church of Christ in Hilo, Hawai'i have contributed these reflections. Some are prose, some are poetry, some are photographs, and some are drawings. Some are repeated from 2022's "Renew the Heart." You will find the fresh imagination of keiki and the seasoned experience of kupuna. You will find thinking honed by education and you will find the dance of new encounters with the Holy Spirit.

You will find a wide range of people bringing their wisdom, spirit, and knowledge to fill the heart.

May their gifts fill your heart, mind, and spirit.

Eric Anderson, Pastor
February, 2024

Wednesday, March 13



Johanna Narruhn

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

Tuesday, March 12

Fill the Heart with Hope

The Light of hope.

Psalm 62:5 – For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

Psalm 42:5-6 – Hope in God, for I shall again praise him, my help and my God.

Isaiah 40:31 – But those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,

they shall mount up with wings like the eagles;

they shall run and not be weary,

they shall walk and not faint.

Romans 12:12 – Be joyful in hope.

Jane Kawazoe

Thursday, February 29

Sadie sadie



Sadie Yamaki

Friday, March 1

*In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.*

– Psalm 19:4b-5

Psalm 19 is a celebration of God's law, reminding us in verse 7 that "the law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul." Before that, however, the poet admired the handiwork of God displayed in the heavens and throughout the Earth, comparing it in verse 4 and 5 to the radiance of a bridegroom on his wedding day.

God's law is like... a wedding? It seems like a stretch.

There is something here, though. God's directions to humanity, heavily influenced by the cultures that recorded them, support positive human relationships – both with God and with other people. In that context, keeping them is a joy, because the most likely outcome of doing things that improve our relationships is... joy.

Rather than a burden, the ancient Psalmist regarded God's direction as a blessing. May we do the same.

Prayer

Bless us with your guidance, O God, that we may be springs of joy. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Saturday, March 2

I get up earlier than I need to so I can start my day quietly with a cup of coffee, reading, journaling and prayer time. I also have a Roomba vacuum. The other day, thinking that I could be “productive” during my quiet time, I set the Roomba to vacuum the room I was in. While I listened to the Roomba as it made its way around the furniture and across the room, I found myself having to interrupt my quiet time to rescue the Roomba. The Roomba was getting stuck in places that it had not gotten stuck before and I was hearing the all too familiar voice from the vacuum saying “Error. Move Roomba to a new location and then press clean to restart.” As I was following instructions of the vacuum, I was thinking that I had not moved furniture since I purchased this vacuum and I had done the perfunctory tasks of picking up anything off the floor so the vacuum would not get stuck or get caught on something.

Monday, March 11

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 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

the debt was forgiven. So then this forgiven servant went out and imprisoned one of *his* servants because of a debt of \$20,730 (I did the math! 😊). Jesus follows up with chilling words (verse 35): “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” And in Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Gulp!

The point of the parable is this: It is simply impossible for anyone to sin against us that even begins to compare with the magnitude of our offenses against God. That seems to be a huge incentive for us to forgive others, does it not?

So how do we forgive? By choosing to do so. It’s that simple. Feelings are not the leading indicator that we have forgiven, rather, they are the lagging indicator. As often as we need to do so, we must remind ourselves that we have forgiven anything and everything from everyone. (And, I would add, we ought to choose in advance to forgive everyone who sins against us in the future.) Don’t worry about your feelings. Eventually, they will catch up with the truth of your decision.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for your boundless forgiveness for us; you settled all of our accounts by means of your sacrifice on the cross. I choose to be obedient and to forgive others just as generously as you have forgiven me. Amen.

Peter Braun

Yet there I was, repeatedly getting it unstuck that morning. Perhaps since it has been in use for 10 years, the programming has changed enough that it can no longer navigate itself like it had when it was newer.

I liken the Roomba and its uncanny ability to get stuck a lot like me. I find myself in places or thoughts that I get stuck in and cannot seem to shake them loose. I find things that I would not have given a second thought in my youth, taking up space in my mind. Like the vacuum, I have picked up a lot of debris and often need a reset. When I am stuck, I need to make an error message – something that sounds like “Prayer! Move closer to God. Then press grace to restart.” And then follow the instructions. Like I listened for the messages that morning with my Roomba, I am assured that God is listening for my messages.

Lorraine Davis

Sunday, March 3



Recent raindrops
pool upon the leaves
which draw their
sustenance
from roots below.

Eric Anderson

Monday, March 4

Fill the Heart with the Holy Spirit

The water of life. The Helper. The Advocate who lives in our hearts and is our daily teacher brings joy to our hearts. Forgiveness

Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit that is from God. – 1 Corinthians 2:12

Jane Kawazoe

Tuesday, March 5

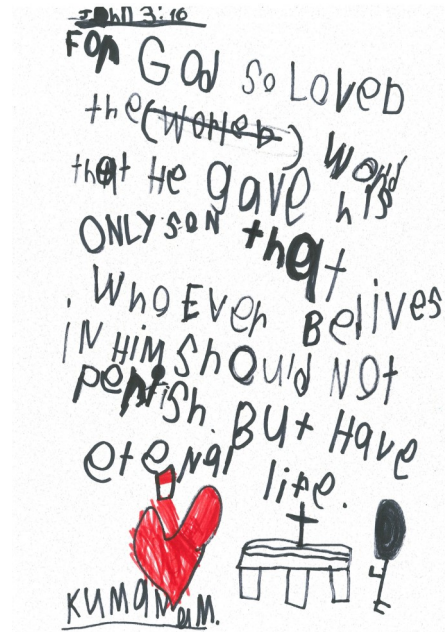


Deisha Elidok

with hope as we look to your future. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Saturday, March 9



Stephen Mori

Sunday, March 10

It seems to me that Easter is of course all about forgiveness. Jesus was born to die. Hebrews 10:14 reads, "For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified." That's us! And many more besides! Hallelujah!

So then why does it seem so difficult for us to forgive others just as we ourselves have been forgiven?

Jesus' parable in Matthew 18:34 is instructive. "...a king wished to settle accounts with his servants" (Matthew 18:23). One of the king's servants owed \$8,256,000,000 and

giggling when Mrs. Unten, our neighbor, stood up and corrected the Sensei. Thus, some of us were baptized twice, and I felt twice blessed—and try to follow his teachings.

Amy Shiroma

Friday, March 8

One of them said to the man clothed in linen, who was upstream, "How long shall it be until the end of these wonders?"

– Daniel 12:6

As is well known, I struggle with keeping a calendar in my head. Time passes in ways that I cannot always trace in my mind. I've managed my ignorance of the future with pocket calendars, desk planners, and in recent years computers and smartphones.

In a vision, Daniel heard someone ask a question about the future. The answer was, basically, "I'm not telling you." The future will come. It will change the fortunes of many. When it will arrive, well... we'll know when it arrives. In a world where I can look up the location of a package, God's approach to the future seems rather strange, but it is the approach which creates hope rather than certainty. I just can't know when "these wonders" will happen. I can live in hope for their arrival, prepare for it, and at the time, rejoice in it.

Fill the heart with hope.

Prayer

We live some of our lives in crystalline certainty, O God, and some in blank ignorance of what is to come. Fill us

Wednesday, March 6

Hearts can open in very strange places. Anthony Ray Hinton had every reason to close his entirely and give in to the darkness. He was incarcerated for 30 years on Alabama's death row despite being innocent of the crime. He chose to open his heart to his fellow inmates, and built a community of love and hope in a very dark place.

If you have not read *The Sun Does Shine* by Anthony Ray Hinton (New York, St. Martin's Press), I encourage you to do so. It is an astonishing story of love, hope, and building community. He opened his heart and built community with those around him in the darkest of places. Could we do that? Do we open our hearts even if we are not in a dark place to those around us?

Do we build community?

Anna Kennedy

Thursday, March 7

Long ago, the late Rev. Jiro Sokabe of the Honomu Christian Church used to "bring his church" to minister at our Pepeekoo Plantation Mauka-Loa Camp (no longer existing) every Tuesday night and he only spoke in Japanese. Fortunately, a young Masao Yamada was "interning" at Honomu, and he would tell us Bible stories and taught us English hymns.

One Easter we were "bussed" to Honomu and lined us up in front, about 10-12 of us, and the Rev. Sokabe began baptizing us. Somehow he accidentally skipped a name and continued baptizing us under a wrong name. We started