



Fill the Heart

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

Moira Tanaka
G. Robert Smith
Khloe Santo
Percyna Pitiol
Emyann Omae
Yoshiro Mori
Gloria Kobayashi
Jane Kawazoe
Lorraine Davis
Eric Anderson

Series Editor: Eric Anderson
Layout and Support: Momi Lyman

This devotional is a 2024 publication of Church of the Holy Cross United Church of Christ in Hilo, Hawai'i. All contributors retain copyright of their original works.

A Daily Devotional for Lent

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



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

worship, wouldn't they? I'm often struck by the way that candy advertisements claim near-divine powers for their wares. Political leaders here and elsewhere request (and receive) plaudits that seem... over the top, to me. And don't get me started on the worship of the economy and the Almighty Dollar.

Those won't fill the heart.

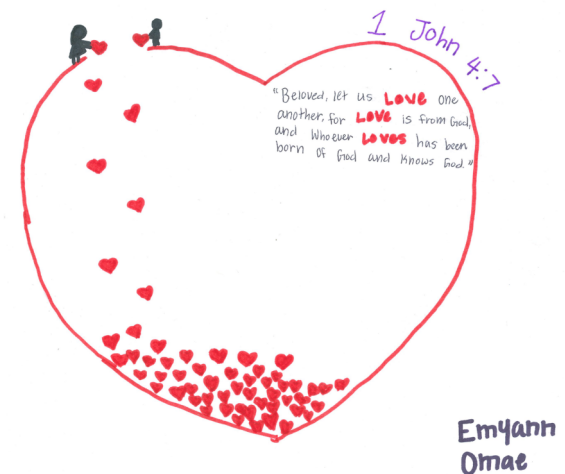
The Psalmist had it right. Celebrate the glory of God. Then your hearts will rejoice. Then your hearts will be filled.

Prayer

I praise your name, O God, for the greatness of your power and the greatness of your love. I praise your name, O God, and my heart is filled. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Wednesday, February 28



Emyann Omae

Monday, February 26



So tiny. So beautiful.
Let it fill the heart.

Eric Anderson

Tuesday, February 27

Psalm 105:3

Glory in his holy name;

let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

We do not worship in a... demonstrative style. At least, not most of the time. There are United Church of Christ congregations that are far more enthusiastic in worship. There are several of them on our island. Sometimes I find that such worship fills my heart, and sometimes I find that less emotional worship fills my heart.

What does not fill the heart is to glory in something other than God. Plenty of people and plenty of institutions and plenty of organizations would happily receive our

Wednesday, February 14



What will fill the heart
when ashes are the day's apparel?
From dust we come, to dust we go,
but ashes once were green
and spread across the azure sky.
We, too, are living, growing dust,
so fill the heart with life.

Eric Anderson

Thursday, February 15

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.” – Galatians 5:22

Re-reading the devotionals in 2022’s *“Renew the Heart,”* I remember a time of sadness, even despair. However, this 2024 Lenten season finds my heart filled with gladness and lightness. Covid has declined, and my grandson and daughter are recovering from their long bout with ciguatera poisoning.

I found happiness during the busy, busy Christmas season: our Sunday School children presented their comedic Christmas pageant; our church was filled with voices singing Handel’s *Messiah*, and the Christmas Eve service was inspiring. Sales at my furniture gallery have been good. The weather has been clear and filled with beautiful sunrises. Ray’s hard work in raising 500 mamaki tea plants has resulted in beginning harvests. We remain healthy and busy.

More than anything else, our Sunday School students have blessed me and our church. They willingly participate in activities that spread God’s message of love. Last year for Lent, they produced a mural depicting the Last Week in Jesus’ Life. For Christmas, they helped sponsor the “Giving Tree” for those in need. They wrote thank you cards to Evonne Shiohita. And preparing for this devotional book, they read aloud Bible verses on the topic, “Filling the Heart,” chose a verse, wrote it out and illustrated it. Indeed, our students “Fill my Heart.”

Gloria Kobayashi

in my path and asked “Did you miss me?” and before her words were completely out of her mouth, I was enfolded in a bear hug with her adding “Because I really missed you!” This time, the bear hug lasted a while – we were both crying. Janet’s husband was terminally ill, she was having health issues of her own and her responsibilities for caring for our aging mother were increasing. I was going through the devastating process of divorce and both of us were feeling terribly alone. As we shed our tears, we understood that our hearts still held a place for each other, but they needed filling. Our hearts were filled and it was the first of many hugs and “fill-ups” during my visit.

Our weekly Bible studies carry a consistent theme demonstrating the steadfast and everlasting love that God has for his children. As I grapple to understand and accept the idea that God holds me in His heart and desires that connection, I often wonder what a common conversation would look like with God. (I was raised in the tradition of formal prayer, not everyday conversations.) Knowing me, I would negotiate with God like Moses did, argue and complain like some of the other prophets, put my foot in my mouth much like Peter did, and outright disobey His instructions, much like Jonah did. As I look at these examples, I walk away realizing that God continued to demonstrate His everlasting and steadfast love to his children despite the short comings. I am also realizing that when I feel distanced from God, it was me that had moved away, not God. I can only imagine that when I step back into the presence of God, that He steps into my path and asks “Did you miss me?” and as he enfolds me in His love, He adds “Because I really missed you.”

My heart is filled.

Lorraine Davis

Saturday, February 24

Fill me... with Gratitude.

Psalm 100:4-5: Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, (and his faithfulness to all generations).

1 Thessalonians 5:18: Give thanks in all circumstances.

Jane Kawazoe

Sunday, February 25

After a two-week absence from the pulpit, Rev. Eric asked the congregation "Did you miss me?" and after a very brief pause, he added "Because I really missed you." It filled my heart. Rev. Eric was letting the congregation know that he held us in his heart and during his isolation with his illness, he missed that connection with us.

His comment had me time travelling back to my college days when I would come home for that long weekend or break. My sister, Janet, who is eight years younger than me, would plant her 10- or 11-year-old body in my path and ask me "Did you miss me?" and then throw her arms around me and add "Because I really missed you!". Given that my family was not a demonstrative family, this was one of the few hugs that I would give or receive while I was home, but here was my outspoken sister, telling me that I had a place in her heart, and she wanted to stay connected. My heart was filled.

I then time-travelled to my last visit to Michigan. It was literally two weeks before we were forced to COVID isolate. Janet, now 60, met me at baggage claim. She planted herself

Friday, February 16



Percyna Pitiot

Saturday, February 17

Fill me... with Grace.

God's favor, love, divine good, mercy.

Ephesians 2:18: For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.

2 Peter 1:2: May grace and peace be yours in abundance in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Jane Kawazoe

Sunday, February 18

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. —Proverbs 4:23

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 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

Friday, February 23

Romans 5:5

And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.



Yoshiro M.

Yoshiro Mori

Thursday, February 22

Invited

I was born to a Buddhist family. I can recall sitting on a cushion in front of the shrine, beside my mother, and praying. I can also picture my grandmother offering a fresh scoop of rice on the shrine daily. I can hear her telling a friend that the priest gave a good sermon.

WWII started and the Buddhist priests were sent to the mainland internment camps. My mother felt that the children should attend church services. She therefore *invited* the Mormon elders to hold services at our community center. This was my introduction to Christianity.

The war ended and the Buddhist priests returned. I went back to attending Buddhist services at the temple. Services were difficult to understand because the priest spoke much of the time in Japanese. I did not enjoy going to church and therefore attended sporadically.

While attending school in Honolulu, my friends and I visited several churches. After graduating, I worked at Mid Pacific Institute and attended chapel services there.

Upon moving to Hilo, I was unable to find a job and I attended the University of Hawaii. There I met up with Ronald Fujiyoshi who was a senior at MPI when I worked there. He *invited* me to attend the service at the Church of The Holy Cross as his father was the pastor at that time. I felt welcomed and comfortable and I have attended this church ever since and that was over fifty years ago.

Moira Tanaka

this, from the New English Bible, is “Guard your heart more than any treasure, for it is the source of all life.”

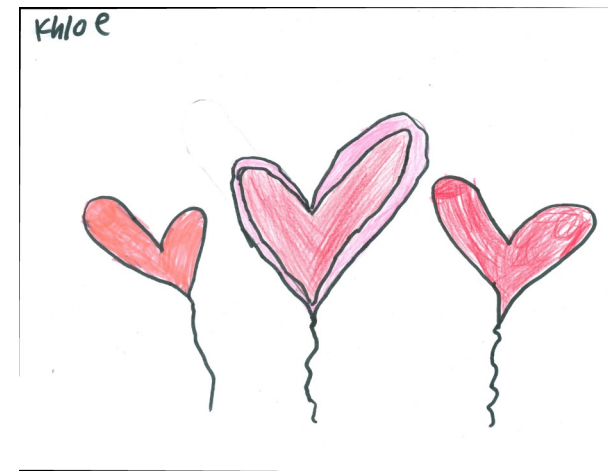
“Keeping” (or “guarding”) our hearts doesn’t mean closing them or hardening them. In fact, that would be the opposite of wisdom. Closing off or damming up the springs of life would be fatal to our spiritual wellbeing. Hardening of the spiritual arteries wouldn’t be any better. Instead, opening ourselves 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

Monday, February 19



Khloe Santo

Tuesday, February 20

Psalm 77:9-11

Has God forgotten to be gracious?

Has he in anger shut up his compassion?"

And I say, "It is my grief

that the right hand of the Most High has changed."

I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;

I will remember your wonders of old.

I love the honesty of the Psalmists. They rarely pulled a rug over our eyes to hide the nitty-gritty struggles of living.

When they hurt, when they suffered, they said so. "Has God forgotten to be gracious?"

Can't you feel the ache in the ancient Psalmist's heart?

Those great poets also summoned the words of comfort. "I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD." Though pain and suffering may drain the resources of the heart, the memory of God's faithfulness refills the heart. Not as quickly, I grant you, as a speedy "Yes," to a prayer, but assuredly.

Fill your heart with the stories of God's greatness.

Prayer

When I ache, O God, and when I wonder where your mercy is, help me recall the times when your help was near and present. In the memory, fill my heart. Amen.

Eric Anderson

Wednesday, February 21

Matthew 4:1

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil.

Jesus' Temptation gets a lot of dramatic effects in Matthew's account. The devil moves Jesus about, from the wilderness where they started to the pinnacle of the Temple to some high place where he can see "all the kingdoms of the world."

My temptations don't work that way. It doesn't take much to distract me or entice me or move me away from my planned (and hopefully faithful) course. They don't come from a single figure, but from family and friends, people I encounter, media, and of course my own imagination. They're harder to identify as temptations. To be honest, that sounds better than trying to maintain my cool in the face of the devil.

Better, but still not good.

Can I fill my heart with something better than temptations?
Can I fill my heart with what nourishes? Can I fill my heart with dedication to God?

Prayer

I am more than capable of filling my life with the things that tempt me, O God. Fill my heart instead with your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Eric Anderson