

From the Bishop

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The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



HOLY WEEK 2025

April 9, 2025

Na ke aloha o ke Akua ma loko o Iesu Kristo, e aloha iā ‘oukou ā pau!

We come to Holy Week 2025 with a world turned upside down. In my years as Bishop, I have too often acknowledged massive changes in our world. Together we have walked through the banking crisis and economic downturn of 2007/2008, deployments of friends and family in the Iraq/Afghan wars, the Pandemic, and the Maui fires (with a continuing recovery). The actions of the Federal government in recent weeks have, in many ways, more profoundly changed the social order of the nation and the world than anything in living memory. Being frank, much that is happening is a direct challenge to Christian faith and the teaching of the Episcopal Church.

I enter Holy Week falling back on Scripture study and prayer. As I discern with you, God's people in the Diocese of Hawai'i (The Episcopal Church in the Hawaiian Islands, Guam and Saipan), on how we will faithfully respond.

In study, I have turned to the Hebrew Prophets, especially Jeremiah and Micah, and Lamentations. As always, I am grounded in the Gospel of Matthew and the Letter of James. From this study, I am reminded that the way of faith is often at odds with the world. Our times are really much like those of the past. The path of faith, hope and love, though well worn, can sometimes feel lonely by those of us on the way of a faithful pilgrim.

As we enter Holy Week, I ask that you ruminate with me on our response using the words of former Presiding Bishop Michael Curry, as the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement to the new world order.

“With what should I approach the Lord and bow down before God on high? Should I come before him with entirely burned offerings, with year-old calves? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with many torrents of oil? Should I give my oldest child for my crime; the fruit of my body for the sin of my spirit? He has told you, human one, what is good and what the Lord requires from you: to do justice, embrace faithful love, and walk humbly with your God.” Micah 6:6-8

“The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice,” were words spoken by Theodore Parker, the abolitionist minister in 1853. Martin Luther King Jr. modified the quote during the Civil Rights Movement when he proclaimed, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” (The Gospel Messenger 1958) The quote in either form can be interpreted to mean that the struggle for justice will be rewarded even if it takes some time.

In our time, I am aware that the arc seems to be somewhat leveling out. Evil can come dressed in the “Christian” garb. Christian Nationalism is racist and we must reject any attempt to connect the Christian faith to white supremacy, any national leader or political movement. I urge you to read [*The Crisis of Christian Nationalism Report from the House of Bishops Theology Committee*](#).

God is not an American. As Christians, we are called to be good citizens of the United States and work to bring policies in alignment with our core beliefs. We are also aware that others may disagree with us. We are called to be respectful, humble, and gracious with others. Humility demands honest reflection on our own national life, and of our own individual beliefs and actions. Are we living justly, loving faithfully, and walking humbly with God?

Holy Week begins with such a reflection.

“The Lord proclaims: Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and declare this message: Listen to the Lord’s word, king of Judah, you who sit on David’s throne—you and your attendants, and all those who go through these gates. The Lord proclaims: Do what is just and right; rescue the oppressed from the power of the oppressor. Don’t exploit or mistreat the refugee, the orphan, and the widow. Don’t spill the blood of the innocent in this place.” Jeremiah 22:1-3

Governments are not religious institutions, and no government is “endorsed” by God. As Christians, we are called upon to evaluate policies of government and hold officials to moral accountability. As churches, we are called to fill the void when the poor, the rejected, the children, and the elderly are left in the gap.

We do that through our local congregations by supporting food banks, ministries to others, and engagement with our neighbors.

As Episcopalians, I call your attention to four important groups:

- With cutbacks by the Federal government at FEMA and in international aid, [Episcopal Relief & Development](#) is going to be increasingly important. Bea and I make a monthly donation to ERD as part of our monthly tithe. Please consider making a monthly donation to this essential ministry of the Episcopal Church.
- Changes in immigration policy have decimated programs that care for refugees and migrants. [Episcopal Migration Ministries](#) welcomes refugees, educates communities, and mobilizes congregations to advocate for the protection and rights of all refugees and migrants.
- [The Episcopal Peace Fellowship](#) was founded in New York City on November 11, 1939, with the mission to pray, study, and work for peace. The work is carried out by three action groups: Gun Violence Prevention, Death Penalty Abolition, and Palestine Israel Network. Two canonically resident priests of this Diocese are leaders of EPF: The Rev. Kerith Harding is the Executive Director, and the Rev. George Clifford is chair of the Board.

- [American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem \(AFEDJ\)](#), a nonpolitical, nonsectarian, 501(c)(3) organization, is the leading fundraising organization for the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem. The sole focus is to mobilize financial resources for the diocese and its humanitarian institutions – its schools, hospitals, and centers for children with disabilities in Palestine, Israel, Jordan, and Lebanon.

We need to work together as Christians and Episcopalians for peace and justice.

Holy Week is a good time to create or renew connections.

“Peter said to Jesus, ‘Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Should I forgive as many as seven times?’ Jesus said, ‘Not just seven times, but rather as many as seventy-seven times.’” Matthew 18:21-22

“Jesus said, ““You have heard that it was said, You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who harass you so that you will be acting as children of your Father who is in heaven. He makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love only those who love you, what reward do you have? Don’t even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing? Don’t even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore, just as your heavenly Father is complete in showing love to everyone, so also you must be complete.”” Matthew 5:43-48

In the midst of the struggle, we must do our own spiritual inventory. I commend a sermon from Martin Luther king, Jr.: [“Loving Your Enemies,” Sermon Delivered at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church](#). Wherever we are in a political conversation, we must not demonize other human beings. To “respect the dignity of every human being” (as we promise in the Baptismal Covenant) includes those with whom we disagree and those who themselves do not respect the dignity of others. A spiritual inventory during Holy Week includes self-reflection on one’s own words and thoughts about others.

I think a great example of speaking truth to power without guile was when [Bishop Mariann Edgar Budde of the Diocese of Washington](#) said to the President: “I ask you to have mercy upon the people in our country who are scared now.” She said this invoking gay, lesbian, and transgender children, as well as undocumented immigrants and asylum seekers, some of whom fear for their lives. The call for mercy is pastoral and loving.

“Know this, my dear brothers and sisters: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to grow angry. This is because an angry person doesn’t produce God’s righteousness. Therefore, with humility, set aside all moral filth and the growth of wickedness, and welcome the word planted deep inside you—the very word that is able to save you. You must be doers of the word and not only hearers who mislead themselves.” James 1:19-23

Holy Week is a time for each of us to come to grips with our failings and the harm that we have done to others – even complicitly. I find a careful reflection on [An Exhortation](#) on Wednesday in Holy Week a helpful practice. I don’t take Holy Communion from the conclusion of the Holy

Thursday liturgy to the Great Vigil of Easter. Taking a personal inventory can prepare one for a truly meaningful Easter.

“Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus told them to go. When they saw him, they worshipped him, but some doubted. Jesus came near and spoke to them, ‘I’ve received all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything that I’ve commanded you. Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.’” Matthew 28:16-20

Holy Week leads us every year to Easter. Even in trying times, we have the promise of Jesus Christ: *“Look, I myself will be with you every day until the end of this present age.”* Easter is the reminder that we already live in a time of resurrection and the reign of God. We live in a time of justice, peace, and love. The rest of the world just sometimes doesn’t realize it.

Lord God, whose blessed Son our Savior gave his body to be whipped and his face to be spit upon: Give us grace to accept joyfully the sufferings of the present time, confident of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko mākou Haku,
+Bob

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