

## From the Bishop

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The Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i



Ash Wednesday 2026

Aloha my dear Siblings in Christ Jesus,

As we prepare for a holy Lent, I am keenly aware that we live in complicated times. I am also cognizant that this has been true for most of history and throughout the world. The brokenness of anxious and finite humanity can lead to anger, division, hate, and violence. It is too often the innocent and the powerless who most suffer.

As the followers of Christ Jesus, we call the world to another way. In his book *The Love that is God: An Invitation to Christian Faith* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2020, p. 13, Kindle Edition), Frederick Christian Bauerschmidt opens his introduction with: “Being a Christian is difficult. It is difficult because love that goes all the way to the cross is difficult, both to receive and to give. It has always been difficult, though at different times and places that difficulty has been felt in different ways. In our own time and place, the postindustrial West, difficulties include those arising from the nature of the modern world that make Christian claims seem incredible: a narrowed understanding of truth, suspicion of traditions, ever-increasing individualism.”

It used to be easy to be a Christian for most people in the United States. It was just something one did. We would go to church on Sunday and all was well. Being a Christian was for many just part of the culture. Now there were crisis times. Christians engaged in civil disobedience as part of the Civil Rights movement. The Confessing Church stood against the Nazi regime in Germany. There were costs, but for most such sacrifices were few and far away.

Much of the time in recent years, we have rarely been called upon to truly self-reflect on being a Christian. This is all the more true for Episcopalians in the United States. As a denomination, we don't demand much of our members. It is essentially get baptized, show up a couple of times a year to take Holy Communion, and give enough that the treasurer can track your offering (if that). In other denominations, there are stricter rules about drinking alcohol or requirements about tithing.

Beginning with the Book of Common Prayer of 1979, Episcopalians confirmed the Baptismal Covenant as our standard of common life:

<i>Celebrant</i>	Do you believe in God the Father?
<i>People</i>	I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

*Celebrant* Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?  
*People* I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

*Celebrant* Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?  
*People* I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting.

*Celebrant* Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in  
the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?  
*People* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall  
into sin, repent and return to the Lord?  
*People* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of  
God in Christ?  
*People* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your  
neighbor as yourself?  
*People* I will, with God's help.

*Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and  
respect the dignity of every human being?  
*People* I will, with God's help.

In many ways, these words have changed the Episcopal Church. It has helped us remember who we are and to whom we belong.

Bauerschmidt is a Roman Catholic Deacon and Professor of theology at Loyola University Maryland. His understanding of the Gospel is embodied in the words of the Baptismal Covenant:

At the heart of Jesus’s proclamation of God’s kingdom is a call to live as if God truly is love, a love that is, as the Old Testament Song of Songs puts it, “strong as death, passion fierce as the grave” (Song of Sol. 8:6). Jesus tells his followers, “do not keep striving for what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive after all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, strive for his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well” (Luke 12:29–31). Jesus knows that “the nations of the world” live a life of striving after security, fearful of human enemies and an indifferent providence. Jesus is not, of course, opposed to people working for a living; he himself was apparently a carpenter by trade (Mark 6:3). But he is opposed to worldly striving that proceeds as if we are each in this thing for ourselves, children abandoned by God our Father to make our own way. He is opposed to any way of life that by its anxious striving and lack of trust denies the love that is God. He calls his followers to strive instead for the kingdom that is free of striving. (*The Love That Is God: An Invitation to Christian Faith*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2020, p. 13, Kindle Edition)

The call of Lent in 2026 is asking again: Am I truly willing to live the promises of the Baptismal Covenant? Do I truly trust God enough to “love my neighbor as myself” and to “strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being”?

As we live into Ash Wednesday and Lent this year, I invite you to take the promises of the Baptismal Covenant as your guide for life. The answers to these questions can help us respond to the world. They can allow us to face the world with love even in those times when the cost is high. They remind us that beyond the cross is the resurrection.

I pray that you have a holy and life-giving Lent.

*Almighty God, whose beloved Son willingly endured the agony and shame of the cross for our redemption: Give us courage to take up our cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.*

Aloha ma o Iesu Kristo, ko mākou Haku,

+Bob

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