

Ponderings of Pastor Paul

No doubt, with the tenth anniversary of the attack on the World Trade Center there will be much reporting and remembering of the event. It is incredible how much our world has changed since that day—from the way we travel, to the way we see our world, to the way we structure our government, and even the way we see ourselves as Americans. In the midst of this reflection, it is also a good time to wonder how has our faith and spiritual life been changed over these last ten years?

I was teaching a group of elementary children the Good Friday story. With large eyes filled with wonder, one student asked, "Pastor Paul, why did God allow those evil men to kill his only Son? Couldn't he stop them?"

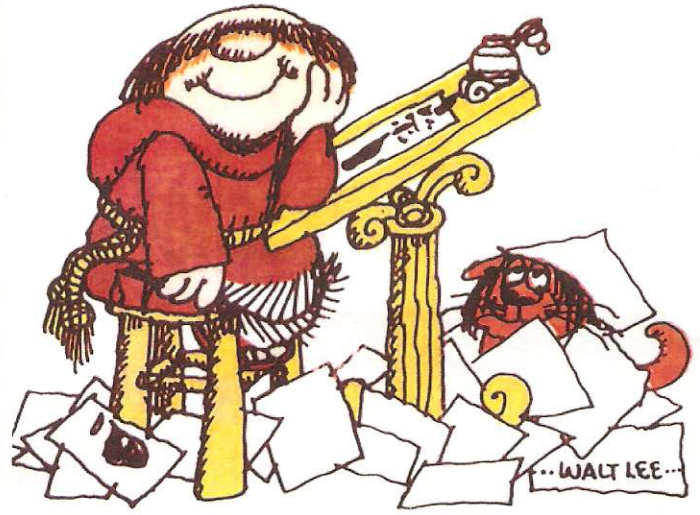
A haunting question from 2000 years ago that is still as relevant as ever. "Why did God allow that evil? Couldn't he stop it? And if he could, then why didn't he?"

It is a question not just of the cross, nor of the Twin Towers ten years ago, but an ongoing question as we continue to experience evil—the forces that seek to diminish and take life from us. Where is God in the midst of it?

First, let me say just asking this question assumes a strong faith, for the question assumes that God is in the midst of it in some way. We do not have a God who only resides in the good and the beautiful parts of our lives and world, and then abandons us to the painful and ugly. The steadfastness of God is in both. This is one of the tenants of our faith: there is one God over all.

But this still leaves the question, where is God in the ugly and the painful? It is easy to see God in the beautiful and joyful, but the other?

Second, the question implies that God should act and intervene as I would act or intervene. I would not allow the suffering of the innocent, and the premature death of my children, or the destruction of my planet. Therefore, God shouldn't either. It reminds me of the song the Cowardly Lion sings in the musical, **The Wizard of Oz**: "If I were king of the forest, I'd . . ." Yet, another one of the tenants of our faith, is there is one God over all, and it is not you. While this statement seems an obvious truth, it is a difficult reality to absorb. There is part of me that still believes I would be better off with more control over my life, more control over my children's lives and my marriage, and my church, and my economics, etc. Yet, to come to the realization that it is far better for God to be God than me, means giving up such illusions of control and



trusting in God's will. It is easy for me to say this is most certainly true with my mind, but, it is much harder to say it with my life, those I love, and my resources. Such a leap of faith!

But, even when we have the courage to make such a leap of faith, the question remains, where is God in the ugly and the hurtful?

The third assumption in the question is the faulty one. The question assumes that the purpose of God is to control our lives and our world. The cross is the ultimate sign that God does not seek to control. The ultimate desire of God is to love. As a parent, there is a point where you no longer control your children's lives. You know you must let them live their lives, and you simply hope the love, nurture and guidance you have provide is enough that they will want to choose to live lives that are loving and caring in return. So it is as we see God on the cross, as ugly and hurtful as it is, that God shows us the extent of his love in the hope that we will respond by choosing to live our lives in his love and care for others. It is as we live in this relationship, God is seen and there is healing in the midst of pain, hope in the presence of despair, love in the midst of hatred, and life even in the face of death. God's love shines even in the darkest place of our world and our lives.

How our world has changed in the past ten years. Yet, one thing has not changed, the love of God for you, for all God's children, and for God's creation. It is God's love given in Word, in bread and wine, and in the water of baptism. It is God's love that will reshape our lives and our world.

When the ugliness and hurt of the world is at its greatest, and it is hardest for me to see God, then it is all the more important for me to trust he is there—Amen. Come Lord Jesus.

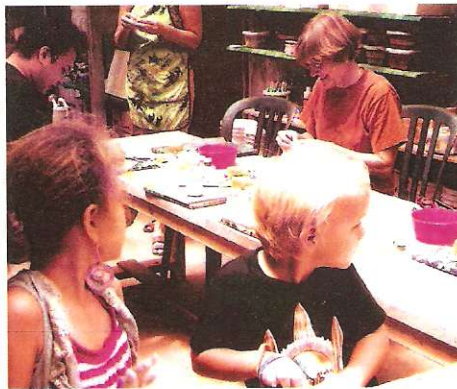
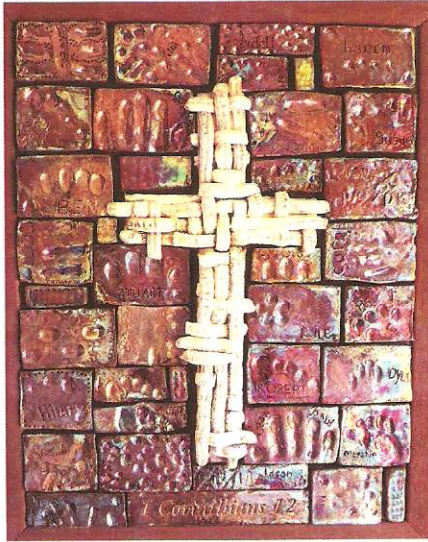
In Christ's aloha and love, **Pastor Paul**

What a great summer at Lihue Lutheran!

Here are a few pictures to share in the joy of being together in Christ!

Vacation Bible School

Once again this year we held Vacation Bible School on three different Sundays after church. With good food, clean fun, and learning Bible Stories, how can you go wrong? Special thanks to those who helped, and especially to the Pittmans and Clayworks !!!

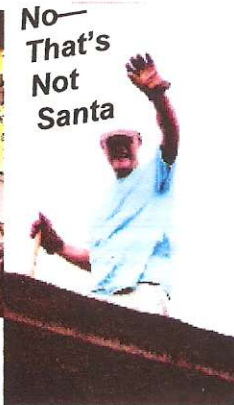


Servant Day

Lihue Lutheran had the opportunity to show God's love by helping Rose Koerte with a new roof. Deepest thanks to those who volunteered, and especially to BRENT OLSON and his crew for providing the "Know-How". What a great effort, and the best news? It rained and Rose stayed dry!!!



No—
That's
Not
Santa



Wounded Warriors

It was our honor to host 12 Wounded Warriors as they recover from their injuries. Special thanks to retired chaplain Rev. Steve Jensen for coordinating the effort, and special thanks to those who helped sponsor their weekend:

- Derek Iha and Duke's Restaurant
- Smith's Luau
- Kauai Adventure Tours
- Blue Dolphin Charters
- Garden Isle BBQ

If you see these folks please thank them from the church for their generosity.



Fall Worship Schedule

Starting this Sunday:

September 11th

- 8:00am Service of Holy Communion
- 9:45 am Sunday School for all Ages
- 10:30 am Service of Holy Communion

We start the fall schedule so that the youth and children can begin Sunday School. Special thanks to the volunteer teachers:

Mele Brewer, Login Alcott, Hilary Eldrige, Donna Meideros, Karen Kirchner

In addition, Pastor Paul will be leading the adults in a discussion on "Good God Questions".

Come meet your teacher and start the new Sunday School year off right!

Catechism: Pastor Paul, Cindy Weeks and Karen will be kicking Catechism off on **September 18th**

Opportunities for Ministry

Lihue Lutheran's outreach and ministry continues to expand with many opportunities to contribute. If you would like to participate, know your presence would be most welcome!

Cleaning the Church: A faithful group meets every Monday morning at 8:00am to clean the church after Sunday worship. It is always impressive to go into our open sanctuary and see how loved and cared for it is.

Maintaining the Yard and Grounds: The first impression of the church is what people see as they pull into the parking lot. If you would like to help with the gardening and mowing of our grounds please talk with Robert Pittman.

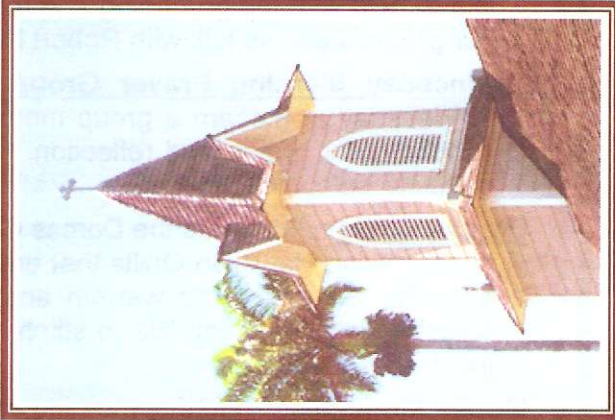
Wednesday Morning Prayer Group: Each Wednesday at 8:45am a group meets in our sanctuary for prayer and reflection. You are certainly welcome to join them.

Dorcas Circle: For years the Dorcas Circle has been making Hawaiian Quilts that are sent all over the world to bring warmth and love to disaster victims. If you like to stitch, why not join them?

Mobile Munchies: Thursday morning at 8:00am (or earlier) the faithful volunteers spread the peanut butter and jelly, feeding the hungry, especially children on our Island.

Centering Prayer: Saturday mornings at 9:30am you are invited to join Centering Prayer, facilitated by Liedeke, and based on the lectionary for our worship on Sundays.

Lihue Lutheran Church, ELCA



Serving Our Lord and Kauai since 1881

*Remembering Our Past . . . Renewing Our Future
Mai Poina Ka Mole . . . E Ho'omaka Hou Ka Hana Mua*

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