



## *Lift Every Voice and Sing*

*By Pastor Jeannie Thompson*

To write this article about the Psalms, I borrowed the title from #593 in our hymnal, which is, *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. The song was composed by brothers John Weldon and James Rosamond Johnson. James was the first African American man to pass the American Bar exam and become a lawyer. He wrote the words. Their song became the anthem of the NAACP in the 1920's and is still sung today as revered words and melody of Black pride and hope.

I took their song title for this article because it is a helpful way to talk about singing the Psalms in worship, which we will be doing during Lent.

The Johnson brothers' context was, of course, their experience as Black Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Their song's lyrics are a prayer of thanksgiving to God. It acknowledges the past experience of struggle and the continued need for vigilance and perseverance. The goal: being treated with dignity, equality, justice, and freedom. As one commentator has written, their song does all of this 'with imagery that evokes the Biblical Exodus from slavery to freedom in the "promised land."'

In short, the song describes human striving, and in particular the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Black community's hopes, obstacles, and aspirations in this country. It is a very human voice.

So, too, are the Psalms. They are not the work of prophets, nor are they histories like Genesis, and Exodus, etc. They do not add to the Laws found in Deuteronomy or Leviticus.

The Psalms are very much the voice of the people. As such, they run the gamut from great joy to deep despair, from enthusiastic praise to anxious, angry complaint toward other people and even toward God. The Psalms are a passionate voice. They are a voice that rises from the core of human need, desires, hopes, fears, love, and even hatred.

They give voice to the human experience of striving and triumph. In many of them, the Psalms attribute victory in war to God's intervention and support. They describe how God's favor plays out in the people's relationships with other people and nations as for example in Psalm 18 when the Psalmist thanks God and describes how God gave him/her victory, and so s/he sings to:

*<sup>32</sup> the God who girded me with strength,  
and made my way safe...*

*<sup>34</sup> He trains my hands for war,  
so that my arms can bend a bow of bronze.*

*(cont'd on Pg. 3 - Lift Every Voice)*

## New Office Hours

Starting February 5, 2024 – The office hours will change to 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

## Burning of Palms - Feb. 11

We will be burning the palm crosses that were given to you on Palm Sunday of last year to make the ash for the Ash Wednesday service. Bring your palm cross to worship service on Feb. 11. There will be extra crosses if you can't find yours, forget, or didn't receive one.

The Ash Wednesday service will be a joint service with NCC Judd St, Community Church, and Kaumakapili Church. It will be held at NCC on Feb. 14 at 6:00 p.m. The disposition of ashes will be offered.

## The Services of Lent 2024

This year, we will be observing the special worship services of Lent with three of our neighboring UCC churches: Community Church of Honolulu, United Church of Christ, Judd Street, and Kaumakapili Church. The following are where and when the services will be:

### Ash Wednesday, February 14

12:00PM at Kaumakapili Church *and*

6:00PM at Nu‘uanu Congregational Church

### Maundy Thursday, March 28

5:30 at Community Church of Honolulu  
(jook supper and worship)

### Good Friday, March 29

\_\_\_\_\_ 6:00PM at Kaumakapili Church

## Note from the Capital Campaign Donor

Thank you for giving me an opportunity to participate in your capital campaign.

Nuuanu Congregational church has a great history and it's members are faithful and good stewards of its mission and property.

Your church is making a difference in people's lives.

Wishing you and your church the best.

## Documenting Your Wishes

Save the dates! The Diaconate is sponsoring, in partnership with Kokua Mau, two We are partnering with Kokua Mau in offering two sessions on "Documenting your Wishes" on February 25 and March after worship in the choir room. The goals of the program are:

Learn how to talk with your loved ones about what matters most to you.

Share about the kind of care you want to receive with your doctor.

Help you feel more confident and ready for the future.

The first session is an interactive one, which explores how you like to make decisions, who should be involved, and the type of medical care you do and don't want. It will also cover basics of advance care planning and preparing you for conversations with loved ones.

The second session is a hands on implementation of the lessons learned in session one. You will have time to absorb the information and think it over. During this session you are encouraged to ask questions, fill out an Advance Directive to appoint an agent and document wishes for care.

Arrangements are being made for Zoom participation and we are encouraging people to invite family members to attend, either in person, or by Zoom.

## NCC's Vision Statement

*Nu‘uanu Congregational Church is a diverse, open congregation of faithful Christians who seek to:*

- *affirm all persons as children of God;*
- *respond to the needs of the community and congregation;*
- *respect all views and ideas;*
- *make and nurture disciples; and*
- *spread God's word using our talents and resources.*

(Approved September 16, 2007 at the Special Congregational Meeting.)

## Lift Every Voice

*Cont’d from page 1*

The Psalms also acknowledge loss and feelings of abandonment. They speak for us when we are beyond words either because of deep feelings of joy, or in the extremes of pain and sorrow. One of the most well-known examples of using a psalm in this way was by Jesus as he was dying on the cross. In the moment when God intimately knew human agony he cried out: <sup>1</sup>My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? [Psalm 22].

I mention all of this because once upon a time Christians knew these things about the Psalms because they regularly prayed *and sang* them in worship and in private devotions. They prayed, chanted, and (yes) sang them because the Psalms spoke the words of their hearts. They expressed all of the daily joys and sorrows of human living.

In the quote from Psalm 22 (above), Jesus says what we dare not say ourselves—we do not have to. We do not have to challenge God in our own words. Through the Psalms, we can still express our frustration, sorrow, and agony through the words of the psalmists. Through the Psalms we may come to realize that we are not alone—not in our moments of joy, and not in our moments of sorrow and pain.

Perhaps the most important aspect of letting the Psalms speak for us is that the Psalms do not leave us in frustration or doubt. When we read further in Psalms, like Psalm 22, we hear—even in the midst of pain and loss—we hear the voice of remembrance. Even in the depths of pain, the psalmist remembers who God is and says:

<sup>3</sup> *Yet you are holy,  
enthroned on the praises of Israel.*  
<sup>4</sup> *In you our ancestors trusted;  
they trusted, and you delivered them.*  
<sup>5</sup> *To you they cried, and were saved;  
in you they trusted, and were not put to shame.*

<sup>25</sup> *From you comes my praise in the great congregation;  
my vows I will pay before those who fear him.*

We will have a sampling of what it was like to hear a Psalm express the words of a people on January 28—Kalaupapa Sunday. I searched for a prayer that we could use to honor the more than 8,000 people who were quarantined in Kalaupapa between 1866 and 1969. I could not find anything I thought appropriate and did not feel capable of writing anything worthy enough.

Then I remembered that during the very first year of their exile, the residents of Kalaupapa built a church, *Siloama Church*—the Church of the Healing Spring. The church gave residents a refuge in God. So, on January 28, we will listen to Psalm 46 as it is prayed in Hawaiian.

During Lent, we too will listen and sing the Psalms. Not all of them (there are, after all 150 of them!), but selected Psalms that will take us through the story of Jesus’ journey to the cross. We will learn some simple melodies of response as a cantor sings the main part of the Psalm. Hopefully, our worship will refresh our knowledge and love of the Psalms, we will rejoice in the human voice of empathy and closeness. Mostly, we will never again be at a loss for words as we *lift every voice and sing*.

Grace and Peace,  
Jeannie



## Ohana Ministry

*By Mae Au*

If there are needs that Ohana Ministry can help you with, call one of the coordinators:

### Ohana Ministry Coordinators

*Mae Au, 988-4802*

*Marge Honjiyo, 550-3075*

*Mary Ann Saito, 839-0895*

*Joyce Uyehara, 523-3483*

*Sybil Seto, 550-3068*

*Lori Yamashiro, 292-5249*

We have received two new requests for prayers for health reasons. Please pray for Mike Chung and Susan Hirano.

When you pray, remember the following and their caregivers: Linda Mau, Kimiko Bristow-Canfield, Marcia Grimsley, Carol Hamada, Preston Iha, Craig Oshiro, Matthew Stucke, Lurline Matsumoto (sister of Masa Taba), Rick Au, Stephen Crosier, Fay Matsuura (Friend of Clifford Lum), Barbara Pierce, Ray Miyamoto, Cindy Taketa.

Reminder: Names are added or deleted in the Prayer Corner by individuals, family members or friends. Please inform the Ohana Ministry coordinators if you want your name included or deleted in the Prayer Corner.

### **Prayer Corner**

*By Mary Ann Saito*

*The Lord is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts; so I am helped, and my heart exults; and with my song I give thanks to him.*

Psalm 28:7

Dear God, thank you for your strength, love and all the blessings we have received. Help us to find ways to be kind, loving and forgiving every day. As we begin a new year of governance at NCC we are grateful for the members who have willingly volunteered to serve as officers and board and committee members. Bless and guide them in their deliberations and decisions as they seek to follow your will. We pray for our city Council, state Legislature and national Congress. Endow the members with wisdom, compassion and integrity and help them to enact legislation for the common good of all. Watch over our shut-ins and those who are facing health problems and decisions. Guide and sustain their caregivers. Amen



## Special Gifts

*Give thanks to God whose steadfast love endures forever!*

### **In Memory of**

Neal & Leilani MacPherson IMO Edith Fujihara

Michelle Saito IMO Edith Fujihara

George Honjiyo IMO Edith Fujihara

Shirley Yamamoto IMO Howard Ishihara

Sybil Seto IMO Edith Fujihara

Neal & Leilani MacPherson IMO Lefty Yatsuoka

### **Thank You**

Lani Hirohata

Tazuko Miyashiro

### **Birthday**

Charlotte Nakamura

Gloria Gainsley

Alejandria Galariada

## Deadline for Articles

Nu‘uanu Caller (monthly)  
20th of each month.

NCC News (weekly)  
Wednesday noon.  
Articles will be edited on a  
space available basis.



## Hawaii Foodbank

The collection date is the for  
February 25, 2024.

*We collected 82 pounds of food  
in December.*

## 2024 Altar Flower Donations



2024 Altar Flower Sign-up sheet is up. If there any  
dates you want to sign up for ahead of time. Please email  
the office nuuanucongregational@gmail.com

*Please have Altar Flowers delivered on Fridays, between  
8 am and 4 pm or Sunday mornings at 8:30 am. There will not be  
anyone working on Saturday's until further notice.*

## Can You Bring A Can - For The Hawaii Foodbank?



The last Sunday of each month is Missions Sunday.  
Please bring a canned good or other non-perishable  
food on that day. Boxes will be available to collect  
them. All gifts will be taken to the Hawai'i  
Foodbank.

*The Hawai'i Foodbank will not accept homemade or what  
looks like homemade items. These items will be discarded.*

## Conversation and Tea



This event on Thursday mornings are on hold  
until Further notice. Updates will be in the weekly  
news and the next Caller issue.

## UCC Has Scholarship and Grant Opportunities Available

Looking for available grants or scholarship opportunities? The UCC's  
Justice and Local Church Ministries has a [Scholarships and Grants  
brochure](#) that outlines all opportunities available. Applications are now  
being accepted for all scholarships and grants, and the application  
process for most will close on **March 1, 2024.**

## Recycling

*By Wayne Kobayashi*

Please bring your HI-5  
items any day in  
February.

Leave them outside the  
recycling shed behind  
Kibo Kan. Please help the  
scouts by removing caps  
from bottles, rinsing and  
making sure the containers  
are clean and empty. Keep  
labels on. Only HI-5 items  
are accepted.



## Invitation to Bible Study

Anyone who is wanting to  
join the bible study group is  
more than welcome to.

Pastor Jeannie will be having  
the Bible Study via zoom.

Please let Pastor Jeannie  
know if you would like to  
join the group.

The In-Person Bible Study  
is back on!





Nu‘uanu Congregational Church  
2651 Pali Highway \* Honolulu, HI 96817

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**February 2024**

To discontinue receiving the  
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church office at 595-3935 or email:  
nuuanucongregational@gmail.

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### Lectionary Readings for February

**February 4 (Source of Strength):** Isa 40:21-31 • Ps 147:1-11, 20c • 1 Cor 9:16-23 • **Mark 1:29-39**

**February 11 (Compassionate Community):** 2 Kings 2:1-12 • Ps 50:1-6 • 2 Cor 4:3-6 • **Mark 9:2-9**

**February 18 (God’s Loving Paths):** Gen 9:8-17 • **Ps 25:1-10** • 1 Peter 3:18-22 • Mark 1:9-15

**February 25 (Always Close):** Gen 17:1-7, 15-16 • **Ps 22:23-31** • Rom 4:13-25 • Mark 8:31-38 **or**  
*Mark 9:2-9*