

Sermon: “To Be One with God as God and Jesus are One” by Pastor Chris Eng

Scripture: John 17: 3 & 11, N.R.S.V.

Sunday, May 21, 2023 at 10:00 a.m. at the Kailua Christian Church UCC

Introduction. The United Church of Christ motto is, **“that they may all be one as we are one.”** This church began with this in mind, that all followers of Jesus Christ would be one as Jesus prayer indicates. And this oneness is reflected in the unity of God and Jesus the Christ. It begins with the understanding of Eternal Life which many believe begins when this earthly journey is over. But Jesus makes it clear that “eternal life” begins the moment we enter into a relationship with God and Jesus Christ! We don’t have to wait until we breathe our last!

I dusted off the Pilgrim Hymnal embossed with a cross and in gold with the words, Waiiokeola Congregational Church UCC. At our home, we’ve undergone a renovation that included installation of new windows, sliding doors, hand crafted shutters and the painting of the exterior and interior. Lots of dust everywhere! The four hymns I selected came to mind preparing this sermon. I first sang them in 1968 at Makiki Christian Church, then Nuuanu Congregational in 1981, Waipahu UCC in 1985, and Waiiokeola in 2005. Sometimes we need to renovate the way we look at our church and hymns help us when we listen to the words.

1. “Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life”. The hymn begins with the word “cross” or intersection and this visualizes Jesus coming down from heaven and entering earth and later, going to hell for all of us. Race and clan divides people especially today but the Son of Man (a name Jesus used for himself) understands the fear, the greed, the helplessness, the burdens, even those who are famished souls who are hungering for life. This can be here in Kailua or Kaneohe or in Honolulu. Jesus enters into whatever life we experience so we can find salvation and experience life!

2. “Jesus Shall Reign”. I love to visualize the sun rising in the East and setting in the West as well as God’s realm or kingdom “from shore to shore.” Jesus reigns over all. When the moon waxes, it illuminates light brightly and when it wanes, the illumination decreases. Looking up in the sky gives us this feeling that Jesus reigns forever. This is why we proclaim “Jesus is Lord!”

3. “The Church’s One Foundation”. I selected this hymn for my ordination in 1979 in Seattle. Yes, the church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord. She is the new creation embracing “the Water” that refers to baptism and “the Word” or the Bible. And Christ’s blood is poured out for us as he was crucified so our sins can be forgiven. Yes, the church’s foundation is Jesus Christ the cornerstone. And we are the church, too! Our foundation is Jesus Christ!

4. “In Christ there is No East or West”. In Christ there is also no South or North which acknowledges our differences in that where we were born, where our ancestors came from, where we were raised and where we live today is important. But the emphasis is on “one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide world.” The UCC is the most diverse Church and we come together to do service or ministry to Christ. This is called “the golden cord binding all humankind as we join hands together.” Despite our differences, we focus on our similarities. This is the most important meaning of **“that they may all be one as we are one!”**

Conclusion. Today is a most important moment in the history of Kailua Christian Church UCC. In a little while, members will vote whether or not to call the Rev. Irene Hassan as the next pastor! I first met her knowing she was called to serve Ka Hana O Ke Akua UCC in Waianae where I had given months of sermons as the pulpit supply minister. I attended Oahu Association events where I would talk to her and I

participated in her Ecclesiastical Council on Zoom and watched her being ordained on Zoom at Church of the Crossroads.

I could not imagine a more perfect minister for Kailua Christian Church UCC! She brings the vision encapsulated in these 4 hymns. She has experienced places where a diversity of people live (“Where cross the crowded ways of life”). She has traveled to places on this earth where “Jesus shall reign” and believes the Body of Christ is where she is called to serve (“The church’s one foundation.” Her life reflects different cultures and faith traditions as she lives this hymn, “In Christ there is no east or west.” The Lord has answered your prayers! PTL!

Pastoral Prayer: A Bidding Prayer
(Shared during the Congregational Prayer)

Leader: God who listens to us and answers our prayers, we give thanks for this time of prayer.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Christ as the one who brings healing and wholeness, we lift up those who are not well.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Holy Spirit who comforts us, bring peace to those who grieve loved ones lost.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Jesus who calls us to follow as disciples, encourage us to read your Scriptures.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: God of Kailua, Kaneohe and all the places we come from, may our Light shine.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: God of the United States of America, we pray for our leaders in Congress.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Christ who loves the world, we pray for peace that begins with each of us.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: God of KCC, guide all members as they vote in the Congregational Meeting.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Jesus who loves us, may all of us leave to bring love to others.

People: Hear our prayers O Lord.

Leader: Amen.

People: Amen.