

WAIPAHU UCC

'Ohana Weekly Roundup

August 2, 2020



Aloha Family and Friends,

I hope this letter finds you well. We have been keeping a close on the rising COVID-19 case numbers here on O'ahu. Public schools have been pushed back two weeks and bars have been shut down. Many of you have expressed concerns with members

of the community not taking proper precautions and gathering together in large groups and parties at homes or beach parks. We have not been opening our facilities to groups for parties or large gatherings, just smaller exercise and dance groups. We are also working with the ESL classes to get them going again safely. We will continue to review each of the mandates as they come and make the adjustments to help keep our community safe.

Our renovation work is starting this week. One of the small blessings in this time is that with almost everything else on our campus on hold there will not be much in the way of disruption. The office should remain open, but access to the church and social hall may be limited while they are working. It's such a blessing that we are able to continue with this project even during a pandemic. Some of the work being done has been planned for far longer than I have been here at Waipahu UCC. I believe this is marking a turning point for our church. The other day as I came out of the office, I saw that they had taken back some of the barriers for the rail construction and I could see how the station exit onto Hikimoe St. would place people right on our doorstep. That is part of the future we are building towards, even as we face this global public health challenge. Thank you for being with us for all of this, and for all your love and support.

Keep praying with us and turning all of this over to God.

-Pastor Makana

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VIRTUAL CHURCH

LIVE Cast Sunday's at 9:30 am on our Facebook or Youtube page. Get there early Sunday with your 'ohana to worship with us! Can't make it? Catch the broadcast later in the day.



Renovations begin on the bathrooms

“Overcomers”

Readings: Romans 8:31-39

“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

For the past few weeks we have been looking at some of the images the Bible uses to describe us as God’s people. We have seen that we are **friends** of God, beloved and held dear. We have seen that we are His **handiwork**, created in His image to do His work. Now today we see that we are **overcomers**, winners, victorious through Christ over all things for all time.

Most of us have felt like winners at some point in our lives, but we don’t often run into people who act like they are winners all of the time. Those kind of people actually tend to bug us, like that kid you knew growing up who would always take his ball and go home if the game wasn’t going his way. One that always bugs me is when you see athletes win a contest based on a bad call by an official still bragging about a victory afterwards. But on the other hand, I also see people who act like winners everyday who I admire a lot. People like cancer survivors who triumphed in the face of death, or even some cute long married couple who wake up every day feeling like winners because they have each other. I know my grandpa always felt like he was a winner just for surviving World War II. People like that know they didn’t win on their own, but that they won with the help of others and by the grace of God. In Christ there is ultimate victory over all things, and we should feel that triumph, because that victory is real. But their victory isn’t in us alone, but in participation with God.

Participation can mean different things to different people. For instance, I grew up in the participation trophy generation. We got an award no matter how hard we tried and often times that led to us not wanting to try at all. Once I knew I was getting the same award every season I stopped wanting to play soccer. The thrill was gone. We can take a similar attitude with God sometimes if we aren’t careful. Christianity becomes reduced to an empty participation trophy when we think that a confession of faith is the end of the story and nothing matters except going to heaven when you die. This was famously, and most cynically, done with some of the old medieval kings. They would wait until they were on their death bed to convert to Christianity. That way in the meantime they felt they could do whatever they wanted. I don’t know if that works, God judges, not me, but I do know that they lost the everyday joy of life lived with the victory of Christ.

Have you ever climbed a mountain? Felt the elation? My two oldest boys scored a victory this week when they climbed to the top of a mountain for the first time. We drove over to the north shore and I took them up Ke’alia trail, which is a long set of switchbacks up Mt. Ka’ala. My oldest boy Konrad had gotten half way up with Veronica a few months back but they ran out of water and food and had to go back. This time I filled a huge jug with water and put it in my pack with sacks and we set off on the slowest hike ever up Ke’alia trail. I carried them past a couple of places they couldn’t get through, I lugged all the food for the journey and made sure no one got dehydrated. It was work, but we made it. It was a special joy to see them overjoyed as they made it to the top. (Of course I didn’t begrudge the fact that I had carried everything for a second.) I let them bask in their victory even though they didn’t realize they couldn’t have done it without dad. What kind of father would do that? How much more does your Father in heaven celebrate with you in your victories?

God is proud of your effort. We are facing a lot of unknowns right now. Public schools were supposed to start soon, but now have been pushed back two weeks. Social distancing measures have been put back in place. I personally, as

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a child, always hated the first day of school because of the anxiety of not knowing what things would be like. Back then, my mom would comfort me and tell me it would be alright, the first day of school was something everyone went through. She knew this because she had done it herself. But now the first day of school is coming for our teachers and students and no one knows what it will be like. I can see why everyone is anxious. Everyone trying to get it together for the school year, or to keep their business going in the middle of a pandemic. Many of us are not sure if its gonna work. Know that God sees those efforts, He sees that offering. No matter what comes of it, who questions or doubts it, or second guesses what you are trying, God knows the sincerity of your heart and the effort you are making. It might not work out how you hoped it would, but offered up to God, and done in the love of Christ for others, nothing can defeat it. Not life or death, not angels or demons and not a pandemic.



Paul assures us that we have already won what matters: the eternal. We know the future and so it only makes sense to invest knowing that future. If I had known the future years back I definitely would have invested in Facebook and Apple stock and not beanie babies. That knowledge would have changed my investment priorities and I would be much richer now for it. We know that God wins, so let that set our priorities now. God works all things for good according to His purpose, so we work faithfully towards that purpose. Still, it can be demoralizing to put in a bunch of effort and things not work out for the hoped outcome. Plenty of people have taken all of the precautions for COVID and still gotten sick and that hurts. Bad things happen and some times it's just not your fault. Take heart, God is still with you. Serve him faithfully in the face of the challenges, don't lose heart. Maybe you've got some spaces in your life where you feel like you have failed for one reason or another, maybe you even feel like God has let you down. You feel like you have fallen off the proverbial bike one time too many. Remember that nothing can stand between you and the love of God. Trust in that love for your victory. Listen for that voice of your Heavenly Father when he tells you to get back up and try again. Maybe you need to apply for one more job, find the courage to ask for a little more assistance, befriend a difficult family member, speak out about something that you're not sure you have the courage to bring up. Trust in Him and not on your own abilities, especially in a time like this. He has promised us ultimate victory, ask in His name and you won't be put to shame. 1 John 5: 14-15 says, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him."

Join us in Communion

We turn to communion remembering the victory of Christ on the cross. Communion is a victory celebration and that is important to remember, especially if you are feeling discouraged right now. Even when early Christians faced persecution and death, they celebrated the victory of communion. Jesus himself faced tribulation, he was mocked, beaten and scorned. Now He sits at the right hand of God, as king of the world. So as you come to the table of communion, remember that it is one of victory. Remember that we won, nothing can separate us from God. Good things are coming. Hold the bread and cup it in your hands, taste it, know that the victory is real. Celebrate communion knowing you have found the victory you have been looking for.

