



## The Cathedral of St. Andrew - Honolulu

### Sermon: Year B – 13th Sunday in Pentecost – August 19, 2018, Connecting to Officer Bronson Kaliloa

We're called to connect. That's the nature of the Body of Christ—one bread, one body.



Like a couple of weeks ago when I was finished with our services here at church, I went home and threw some clothes in a duffle bag to go to Hilo for a couple of nights. Then I found that I had half an hour of down time, so I walked down to the corner of Mauna Kea and Pauahi, to a small flower shop there, because that morning *The Star Advertiser* was full of images of funeral services for Bronson Kaliloa, the Hawai'i Island police officer who was gunned down and killed while on duty last month. I wanted to take a bouquet of flowers from all of you—and from me—to put by his name on the memorial wall at the Hilo Police Station.

Why?

Because I wanted us to connect and to acknowledge that we are all connected to that tragic event, and we are deeply affected by that loss—and many of us feel it emotionally, in our *na'au*. And so, I placed a bouquet of flowers from all of you, and a beautiful lei from the Bishop, and I said a short prayer for the Kaliloa Family and for peace—peace so that people will lose their loved ones violently and tragically no more.

I placed those flowers by that name and we connected.

Connection.

When I was a little boy growing up in Guam, Guam was never really home. Even though I was born and raised there, Hawai'i was always what my family and I referred to as home. And so there was a longing for a sense of place that I didn't really know, except for occasional visits to see aunties and uncles during the summer. We're called to connect. That's the nature of the Body of Christ—one bread, one body.

But even though we were far away from home, I could always connect by looking at this huge book with its mustard-colored burlap cover that my grandparents had, a book called *Hawai'i: A Pictorial History*.

I loved looking through that book and connection plays itself out in many different ways and through many different people.

For me, connection was being a little kid, looking through that book and being struck by a small photo of a little boy, about three or four years old, with black wavy hair and dressed up in a short pant suit. And I remember reading the caption under that picture and feeling very connected to that little boy because his birthday fell on May 20th, one day before mine. That's how little kids think, or at least that's how I used to think. Again, connection plays itself out in many different ways and through many different people.

“Our beloved Church regards her children as having bodies as well as souls to be cared for, and sanctions the consecration of these and all that is beautiful in nature and art to the service of God.” . . - Queen Emma.

## 13th Sunday in Pentecost – August 19, 2018, cont'd.

The caption under the photo said:

*Albert Edward Kūikeyeāoli, The Prince of Hawai'i. Great was the jubilation when, on May 20, 1858, Queen Emma bore a son. A promise from Heaven he was, that the Hawaiian race was not doomed. Awe for the hopes of men! Four years later the little Prince was dead. He was the last child born to a monarch of Hawai'i.*

Maybe it was all a premonition into and a connection with my future; because here I am, after all, more than 45 years later in that little boy's parents' Cathedral and remembering him in our services this morning.

And perhaps the words in Psalm 34 weave everything together for us—connecting Prince Albert, his parents, Bronson Kaliloa, you and me; connecting us and giving us the strength to carry on in the midst of tragic events in our lives that could undo us, but that often don't; because somehow, we find inner strength.

And why is that?

Maybe the last line in the psalm is the answer to that question: Seek peace and pursue it. That seems to be a balm for so many who face life after horrible tragedies—seeking peace and pursuing it.

That's what Queen Emma did after the death of Prince Albert, turning her grief into good works and founding schools, hospitals, and this Cathedral church. She sought peace and pursued it.

But that was long ago.

What about today? Perhaps through connection—connection to legacy and connection to story, we have the embodiment of that story in our midst today when a Hilo police officer of Hawaiian descent (the progeny of those who would have been subjects of Prince Albert and his parents) takes children into his home (that aren't his biologically) to foster, to adopt, to love, and to care for. And then to put his life on the line every day to keep us peaceful, the cause of peace for which he ultimately gave that life. It's all very Christ-like, isn't it?

And how do we respond to his death, his Christ-like sacrifice for us? After the death of her son, Queen Emma engaged in good works. Maybe that legacy wafted into the consciousness of those who came after her and her people, people like Bronson Kaliloa who cared for others by taking in

children who needed love and by serving the common good as a police officer agent of peace, the way the death of Prince Albert compelled Queen Emma forth as an agent of peace.

How then does the tragic death of Officer Kaliloa propel us forward as agents of peace?

After I posted photos of the flowers and lei on the memorial wall in Hilo, people commented on my Facebook page, saying:

*Mahalo nui loa. We are all Ohana in Christ and this tragic killing of Bronson Kaliloa affected us all.*



## 13th Sunday in Pentecost – August 19, 2018, cont'd.

Such a tragic loss. Mahalo for honoring his service and sacrifice. We shall keep him and his *ohana* in our prayers.

Acknowledging our interconnectedness with this tragedy is good. And, of course, prayers are good. But we don't stop with prayers. If Bronson Kaliloa put his life on the line as an agent of peace for our sake, how can we put our prayers into action? What can you and I do in return? What can we do to be agents of peace?

Lots actually.

We can reach out to others. We can feel our connectedness. We can empathize. We can act. And we can remember that Jesus said: Whatever you did to the least of these you did unto me.

So, we can march in the streets against gun violence. We can volunteer to serve in soup kitchens or feeding programs. We can gather supplies for needy schoolchildren. Or as I always say, we can smile at a houseless person living on our streets and worshipping in our pews and thereby acknowledge not only our common humanity but also the Christ that we see in the countenance on their faces. Would we have had a different outcome if we had taken the time to do that for Bronson Kaliloa's assailant? We'll never know.

But the bottom line is: We can serve the way Queen Emma served, we can serve the way Bronson Kaliloa served, and the way his family will undoubtedly serve after their horrible loss and his tragic death.

Placing flowers under Bronson Kaliloa's name is a good start, but it's just a start and definitely not a final act; not if his legacy means anything to us. The flowers that were placed by the name *Bronson Kaimana Kaliloa* have already withered away, but his inspiration? Never.

My hope is that the spiritual energy made manifest in the intention of our prayers lands on the fragrance of those flowers, wafts its way into the essence of his name, up into the ether, and into our hearts—propelling us forward to seek peace and pursue it; not only for Officer Kaliloa's sake, and Prince Albert's sake, and our sake, but for God's sake. God needs us to pursue peace. And with the spirits of Prince Albert and Officer Kaliloa to inspire us, I think we have a fighting chance of achieving that end.

Thanks be to God for Prince Albert. Thanks be to God for Officer Bronson Kaliloa. We pray that the essence of their souls will land on our hearts, stirring our spirits to make us agents of God's peace.

*Amen.*