

See God: Hā, Ha, Hā

(rev. 4/05/22)

Second Sunday of Easter, PAAM Sunday, Holy Humor Sunday

Acts 5:27-32, Psalm 118:14-29 or Psalm 150, Revelation 1:4-8,
John 20:19-31
for use on April 24, 2022

*Holy Hā, Batman!: PAAM Sunday Meets Holy Humor Sunday.
A reflection by Rev. Mitchell Young*

Many American churches have been resurrecting an old Easter custom started by the early Greek Christians---"Bright Sunday" or "Holy Humor Sunday" celebrations on the Sunday after Easter. For centuries, many Christian faith traditions celebrated Jesus' resurrection in the week after Easter Sunday, as "days of joy and laughter".

Can Holy Humor relate to the celebration of PAAM Sunday and Asian Pacific expressions of faith? Definitely! Think of the connection between breath and laughter.

In today's reading from John 20, the resurrected Jesus enters the locked room where the disciples are hiding and greets them: "Peace be with you" three times in this passage. In the Hawaiian Bible, Jesus says here: "Aloha 'oukou" a traditional greeting to a group of people. Much has been said suggesting that the "ha" of "aloha" represents breath or even the breath of life. A Hawaiian dictionary should tell you that one of the primary definitions of "hā" is a verb meaning to breathe or exhale. (The other primary meaning relates to the number 4.) In fact, in verse 22, the Hawaiian Bible says of Jesus: "hā ihola 'o ia iā lākou", "he **breathed** on them" and they received "ka 'U**h**ane Hemolele", "the Holy **Spirit**". In Hawaiian language there is an intimate connection between breath and spirit, just as our Biblical languages of Hebrew

and Greek also connect breath and spirit in the words רוּחַ (ruach) and πνεῦμα (pneuma), respectively.

In English, we also see the connection between breath and laughter. After all, you can't laugh without breathing. Put almost any vowel behind an "h" to create onomatopoeia laugh words: we say "funny ha ha"; girls giggle "hee hee", Santa bellows "Ho, ho, ho"; the sneaky villain snickers "Heh, heh heh".

Have you ever sung this children's praise song?

Ho ho ho hosanna!

Ha ha hallelujah!

He He He He saved me!

I've got the joy of the Lord!

All the "h" sounds remind us of joyous laughter.

Moreover, in Thai or Lao text chat language, you can use the number 5 (five: ห้า, ຫ້າ respectively) pronounced "hā" to represent laughter. Typing a bunch of 5's is the Thai/Lao version of LOL (laugh out loud). Go ahead, try type a few 5's separated by spaces in Google Translate and listen to the Thai pronunciation "hā, hā, hā."

The John 20 story of the resurrected Jesus appearing to the disciples on the evening of resurrection day and subsequently to the disciple Thomas a week later, comes across like a hidden camera prank where the unsuspecting targets of the prank encounter the unbelievable. However, this incredible scene doesn't end with "Smile, you're on Candid Camera!" or even "I'm making a funny YouTube video." When Jesus makes the big reveal to Thomas, they invite Thomas to see with his own eyes and touch with his own hands. We might even say that in Jesus' resurrection, God has the last laugh over the power of death. 555!

And on PAAM Sunday, we may also note that ancient church history also goes on to suggest that the disciple Thomas travels

East to South Asia to establish the Mar-Thoma Church in India.
Imagine that! From doubter to believer to church planter! Ha ha!

Possible/Suggested Worship Elements

Passing of the Peace

A traditional Filipino gesture called *pagmamano*, or simply *mano* (literally, “hand” in Spanish) is performed as a sign of respect to elders and as a way of requesting blessing from the elder.

Traditionally, the (younger) person approaches the elder and may ask “mano po” (literally, “Your hand, please.”) as the younger person bows toward the hand of the elder and gently presses their forehead on the elder's hand. It is typically done upon entry to the elder's home or upon seeing them.



Young man greets his new mother-in-law with *pagmamano*.

This greeting also goes by other names in other Philippine languages: it is called *amin* in Visayan and *siklod* in Kapampangan, for example. The tradition is also practiced in Indonesia and Malaysia called *salim* and *salam* respectively.

In our Easter Gospel reading from John, the resurrected Jesus invites Thomas to touch his hands and side, soon after greeting him with “Peace be with you.” For the passing of the peace, on this PAAM Sunday, we invite you to honor your elders using a *pagmamano* gesture accompanied by “Peace be with you” in a language of your choosing [See Appendix for responsive signs of peace in other languages.]

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 150)

[This Psalm encourages the use a variety of musical instruments to praise God in worship. Consider adding a tambourine or cymbal (as suggested in the Psalm) or other percussion instruments as informed by cultures represented in your congregation.

Congregation response in **bold print**. Please edit as is useful for your congregation.]

Hā, ha, hallelujah!

Praise the LORD!

Remove your dirty shoes when you step on holy ground.

It is time to praise God.

Blow the conch shell to invoke the Divine One.

We move to the beat of the ipu gourd

to praise ke Akua with chants and hula.

With bowed legs and strong arms,

our haka declare the mighty deeds of te Atua!

The heart-pounding beat of the *taiko*

Stir us to offer praise to Kamisama.

Piano and pipe organ; guitar and ukulele,

all become instruments of praise.

“Hā”, the breath of life,

inspires every living being to praise the LORD!

All: **Hā, ha, hallelujah!**

Notes for Call to Worship

Hā. Hawaiian word for breath.

Conch shell, called “pū” in Hawaiian language, is blown like a trumpet to signal the beginning of a ceremony or important gathering.

Ipu. A gourd. In ancient style hula the chanter keeps the dancers in sync through rhythmic slapping and pounding of a hollowed gourd on the ground.

Ke Akua. A way to address God in Hawaiian.

Haka. Ceremonial chant/dance in Maori culture.

Te Atua. A way to address God in Maori, Samoan, Tahitian, and Tuvaluan.

Taiko. Traditional Japanese temple drums.
Kamisama. A way to address God in Japanese.

Welcome Song: "You're Welcome Here" Eileen Mitsueda

No matter who you are,
No matter where you are on life's journey,
You're welcome here!
Since God has welcomed us,
We also welcome you with open hearts.
You're welcome here!

Mabuhay! Irasshai! E komo mai! Welcome!
Bienvenidos! Talofa! Aloha! Welcome! Welcome!

(Bridge)
You may speak different words or cherish different thoughts.
One thing I know: this is where you belong.

Pastoral Prayer (John 20:19-31, Acts 5:31, Revelation 1:6, UCC Statement of Faith)

O God, on this first day of the week, we sit cautiously on pews and chairs and respectfully keep distance one from another. And others of us are still at home behind closed doors. And yet, the peace of Christ passes through any walls we build that try to keep out the ones we fear.

As we continue to live through this global pandemic, we thank you that our churches never closed, even when our doors were. We give thanks for the technology of electronic media that has enabled us to be in community, even when not in person. We give thanks for connections that we made with other persons and communities we might not have otherwise sought.

On this PAAM Sunday, we give you thanks and pray for the Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries of our United Church of Christ: for 47 years strengthening the voices of the Pacific Islander and Asian American churches, taking seriously

God's call to bind in covenant faithful people of all ages, tongues and races.

This morning, we remember your Asian Pacific children who are at the receiving end of racism and hate crimes. We remember our girls and women who have been reduced to exotic objects of desire. We remember our elderly who often cannot fend for themselves. Guard all your children from the harm of bigotry and white supremacy. Continue to give us all courage in the struggle for justice and peace as we welcome the stranger into conversation along our mutual journeys.

We also continue to keep in our hearts the people of Tonga in the wake of the powerful volcanic eruption in January off the coast of Tonga triggered tsunami waves across the Pacific. We give thanks for recovery efforts that now slowly return Tonga to a state of normality.

We continue to pray for peace between Russia and Ukraine. We pray for all places around the globe that are ravaged by conflict and war, that Christ's peace may be with all God's children.

Blessing and honor, glory and power be unto you, forever and ever, O God, as we offer all our prayers to you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Leader and Savior. Amen.



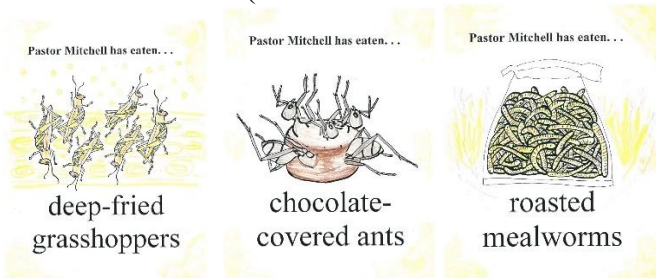
Prayer of Confession (Acts 5:28, 30-32, headlines, “The Batman”)
God of our ancestors, we confess that we don’t want innocent blood on our hands, and yet we have stood by when sisters, brothers and others were hung on a tree, shot in a spa, pushed into subway trains, sucker punched on city streets, and told to go back to where they came from. We know so well that in real life, the Batman will not protect them, and neither did we. Can a Savior give repentance and forgiveness of our sins? We desire to be witness to these things.

Assurance of Forgiveness (John 20:23; Revelation 1:4-8)

Dear Asian churches and all the tribes of the earth: God hears our prayers, both spoken and those we are too ashamed to pass through our lips. The choice is ours: forgive sins or retain sins. God loves you and frees you from your sins by the blood of Jesus Christ. Let us also forgive sins of others against us. Be now a loving kingdom of priests serving Almighty God who is, and who was, and who is to come. Amen.

Children’s Sermon (John 20:19-31)

“I Doubt It!” Game (also known as “Two Truths and a Lie”)



You will see pictures describing three “unbelievable” experiences I have had. However, only one of them is NOT true. When you hear the one that you think is NOT true, shout out (keep your masks on) “I DOUBT IT!” Those worshipping online can type “I doubt it!” in the comments section. For example, “I doubt #1” or “I doubt #2 or “I doubt #3”. Ready? Here we go...

1. Pastor Mitchell has eaten deep-fried grasshoppers.
2. Pastor Mitchell has eaten chocolate-covered ants.
3. Pastor Mitchell has eaten roasted mealworms.

[Give the children/congregation a little time to cast their votes for which one they believe is fake (not true). Then reveal the answer.]

Ready for the answer? #2 is not true. I have never eaten chocolate-covered ants. I would like to try it someday. I hear they’re delicious. (I had a chance to sample grasshoppers and mealworms when I was a missionary in Thailand.)

Let me tell you about an “I doubt it” experience between Jesus and his friend, Thomas. After Jesus died on a cross, 3 days later he appeared to 11 of his disciples in a locked room. But Thomas was not in the room at the time. When the other disciples told Thomas that they had seen Jesus, you can imagine how Thomas felt: “I doubt it!” (It was kind of like how some people in our church doubted that I had ever eaten roasted mealworms.) It was just too unbelievable that Jesus was alive when they all knew that he was dead. “I won’t believe you until I can see him with my own eyes and touch him with my own hands.”

A week later, Jesus appeared in the room again, even though the doors were locked. This time Thomas was with them. Jesus told Thomas to touch wounds he got when he died on the cross: “Do not doubt but believe.”

But before Thomas even touched Jesus, Thomas answered Jesus, “My Lord and my God! He must have been surprised and happy at the same time.

Isn’t that amazing? Thomas changed from doubt to belief in an instant because he saw his teacher and friend Jesus alive. But what Jesus then says is even more incredible: “Thomas believes because he sees me. Blessed are those who have not seen but still believe.”

Wow! Jesus is talking about us! We were not there that day when Jesus came back from death and showed up in that room, and yet we can believe. That means we have a kind of faith that is blessed by Jesus because we can believe even when we have not seen with our own eyes!

Prayer: Thank you God for Jesus. Thank you that Jesus can live in our hearts, even though we have never seen him in person. Thank you for Jesus’ love. Amen.

Call to Offering (Acts 5:28-29, 32)

Out of their obedience to God, the apostles filled Jerusalem with their teaching about God raising Jesus to new life. Out of our obedience to God, let us be witness to the power of new life in God and in the world through the sharing of our offerings.

Prayer of Dedication (Psalm 118:27-29, Revelation 1:7)

One God, who has more names than there are languages in the world, you are our God and we give thanks to you, for you are good and your steadfast love endures forever. You have given us light in our darkness. And now we approach the beauty of your altar to share a portion of what you have entrusted to us, to bring hope to all the tribes of the earth. Amen.

Benediction (John 20:21-22, Acts 5:32, Psalm 118:29, 2 Corinthians 13:13)

Receive the Holy Spirit as Christ breathes the breath of life on you. As God sent Jesus to the world, Jesus now sends you. Serve as witness to everlasting *Aloha o ke Akua*,* Amen.

* Love of God

You may include this brief description of PAAM in your worship materials space providing:

Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries



Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries (PAAM) was organized in 1974 at a gathering in San Francisco, California, of representatives from different regions throughout the United States. The vision was to unite and move forward at the national, regional, and local levels as Pacific Islanders & Asian Americans in the

United Church of Christ, sharing our unique gifts with one another.

PAAM was voted into existence at the 10th General Synod, in 1975, as a recognized Special Interest Group within the UCC. The 17th General Synod adopted the pronouncement, “A United Church of Christ ministry with Pacific Islanders & Asian Americans” calling to establish an implementation committee to make requests about the ministries of the PAAM churches. The 18th General Synod passed a resolution designating the last Sunday of April as PAAM Sunday when all UCC churches recognize and celebrate the gifts and contribution of Pacific Islanders & Asian Americans in the life of the UCC.

PAAM has initiated, sponsored, supported and participated in many activities at all levels of the conference, worked for greater PAAM representation on all levels of the conference boards, committees, and staff.

PAAM continues to address institutional racism within the church and society, is concerned with issues of human rights and justice, and helps to support and strengthen clergy and lay leadership at the local level.

Appendix 1: Multilingual Sign of Peace (John 20:19, 21, 26)

Hawaiian

Aloha ‘oukou. Peace be with you. (Love to you.)
Me ‘oe pu. And also with you.

Japanese

平安があなたにあるように。 (Heian ga anata ni aru yō ni.)
Peace be with you.
そしてあなたと共に。 (Soshite anata to tomoni.)
And also with you.

Korean

에게 평화가 있을지어다. (Ae-kae pyung-hwa-ka ee-sool-jee-aw-da.) Peace be with you.
너와도. (Naw-wha-do.) And also with you.

Chinese (Cantonese)

祝福您平安 (zook fook nei peng on)
Peace be with you (Bless you with peace)
也祝福您平安 (yaa zook fook nei peng on)
And also with you (Also bless you with peace)

Marshallese

Aenoman nan kom. Peace be with you. (John 20:26)
Bar einwot kwe. And also with you.

Samoan

Ia outou manuia! Peace be with you. (John 20:26)
Ia fa'apea ia te oe! And also with you.

Spanish

La paz sea con ustedes. Peace be with you. (John 20:26)
Y tambien contigo. And also with you.

Tagalog

Kapayapaan ay sumainyo. Peace be with you.
Gayon din sa inyo. And also with you.

Tamil

சமாதானம் உங்களோடு இருப்பதாக
(Samaadhanam ungalodu iruppadhaaga)
Peace be with you.

உங்களோடும் இருப்பதாக
(Ungalodum iruppadhaaga)
And also with you.

Need help with pronunciation? Ask a native speaker of those languages or try cut and paste phrases into Google Translate.

Appendix 2: Resources for “You’re Welcome Here!”

Lyrics and Chords for “You’re Welcome Here!”

Chorus:

Amaj7
No matter who you are;
Dmaj7 F#m E
No matter where you are on life’s journey,
Amaj7 Dmaj7 E
You’re welcome here.
Amaj7
Since God has welcomed us,
Dmaj7 F#m E
We also welcome you with open hearts.
Amaj7
You’re welcome here!

Verse:

Dmaj7 Amaj7

Mabuhay! Irasshai! E komo mai! Welcome!
Dmaj7 Amaj7 E
Bienvenidos! Talofa! Aloha! Welcome! Welcome!

(chorus)

Bridge:

Dmaj7 Amaj7
You may speak different words or cherish different thoughts.
F#m E
One thing I know: this is where you belong.

(chorus)

Ending:

Dmaj7 Amaj7 Dmaj7 Amaj7
You're welcome here! You're welcome here!

[*Mabuhay* = hello/welcome, Tagalog; *Irasshai* = welcome (to our establishment), Japanese; *E komo mai* = welcome, Hawaiian; *Bienvenidos* = welcome, Spanish; *Talofa* = hello, Samoan; *Aloha* = hello/love, Hawaiian; *Foon Ying* = welcome, Cantonese]

Hear the song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBSeEjhRC_U
(Eileen Mitsueda)

Hear the version recorded by Lucia Marco for Woodland Hills Community Church:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl0R_EkSXcY

Hear the song with Hawaiian chorus: Kahu Kenneth Makuakane.
Request mp3 from mpccucc@yahoo.com or view from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=suZ7jE12-14&t=2408s>
starting at 18:10

Hula tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SOcEBXcsSgq>
(Randy Chang/Angie Chuman) Video made in 2013; you may substitute non-contact greetings for congregation greeting portion.

Possible/Suggested music selections

Iesu No Ke Kahuhipa TNCH 252
Praise to God TNCH 5
O Sons and Daughters, Let Us Sing TNCH 244
We Live by Faith and Not by Sight TNCH 256
These Things Did Thomas Count NCH 254
Golden Breaks the Dawn TNCH 470
Enter the Realm of God TNCH 615
Call to Prayer Sing! 61
Lei Mekia Sing! 64

"Together We Are One" an original hymn by PAAM Moderator Dick Hom and Adele Neri. Here is a rendition by the Northern California Nevada PAAM Choir:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LlfMd8iznWg>

Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church (MPCC) wishes for "A Just World for All" in languages of MPCC and Jesus Reigns Victoriously Church (JRVC): <https://youtu.be/2Duyeq1bdkk>

Artwork for slides:

Border strip:



A PAAM Honu (Sea Turtle):



If you have trouble opening these resources or need more help with translations of the phrase “A Just World for All” in other languages used in the UCC please contact Rev. Mitchell Young mpccucc@yahoo.com

See God: Hā, Ha, Hā, Liturgical Resources for PAAM Sunday, Holy Humor Sunday, the Second Sunday of Easter, was written and revised by the Rev. Mitchell Young, pastor of Montebello Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC in Montebello, CA. with much gratitude to our translators, editors, and musicians: Junko Ashida, Dick Hom, Rev. Randon Jello, the late Kahu Richard Kamanu, Rev. Hyo-Jung Kim and Eunyong Kim, Hawai‘i Conference UCC, Rev. Sharon Lee MacArthur, Kahu Kenneth Makuakane, Lucia Marco, Kahu Rennie Mau, Eileen Mitsueda, Rev. Sebastian Ong, Rev. Craig Peterson, Rev. Christopher Ponnuraj. Rev. Dr. Ernie Reyes, Magdalena Reyes, Rev. Masaaki Shiraiwa, Rev. the late Rev. Dr. Sepulona Tanuvasa, Steven Woo, Ryan Yamada, Rev. Lee Yates. See how God is still speaking in Montebello at www.montebelloucc.org