

“Arise to a New Light”
Epiphany & Communion Sunday
Virtual Liturgy
January 3, 2021
Rev. Floren “Tino” C. Cordova, Pastor
Iao United Church of Christ

Poem: “Your Journey” by Pam Brossman

*“Love, laughter and inner peace
It is all part of the healing process.
Find the happy place filled with memories
Dreams and positive energy.
Each day is precious and special,
So focus on all the good things in your life
And let your mind and body heal from within.
Live each day with passion, fulfilment and happiness,
Spend more time with family and friends,
As their love, help and support help you through.
Everyone has a journey they’ll travel in their lifetime,
This is your journey, stay positive and live life.”*

On behalf of Iao United Church of Christ, here in Wailuku, Maui, Hawaii, we extend our best wishes to every one of our Iao House Churches and our brothers and sisters that join us out in the virtual world a Happy New Year. May this year bring us a new rebirth and a hopeful future as the vaccine makes its way out into our communities.

Our first reading this morning, Isaiah first tells us, the reader, to “arise.” For many, 2020 has felt like a year in which they have been beaten down, storm after storm. Maybe for many, it is difficult to hear the words of Isaiah – tired, weak, unable, or even unwilling to “rise!” People are tired – Amen Iao church? People are tired of staying home, tired of staying isolated, fed up with this social distancing, fed up in not being able to see their loved ones, their friends. The darkness of this virus has covered earth for so long that it has been difficult to see the light at the end of any tunnel. Some people have been filled with hatred toward another to a point where it seems that thick darkness has covered over humanity.

As with any storm beloveds, there is usually light that comes forth. There is Usually a rainbow that emerges. Light wins over darkness of all sorts. The first thing we need to do when we have been beaten up by storms or hatred is to heed in these words by Isaiah. RISE Iao church – RISE beloved community out in our virtual world! Our first required action when we are down is to rise up. And not only that beloveds, Isaiah tells us to not only rise, but to "SHINE!" Amen and praise be to God!

The hardships that many have had to endure this past year- today may we all- through it all-rise up and shine. Cov id 19 might have taken one of our loved ones. Maybe an illness took one of our loved one 5-Yet we rise and shine for the glory of God has risen within us. Let us look forward to a time in 2021 when we will also heed to the words of Isaiah- “Lift up your eyes and look around: they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea will be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.” Beloveds, there will be a time when we can safely travel and be with one another. When that time comes, when our sons and daughters can be seen with our eyes we will be thrilled, and we will rejoice. When the abundance of the vaccine comes to our communities like the sea, we will find ourselves rejoicing. The vaccine from a wealthy nation shall mingle in our bodies like a sea and not just that beloveds, just like the wise men we celebrate this Epiphany Sunday, Isaiah had long foretold that gold and frankincense will also be brought forth. People are in need of help! People are in need of a community. People are in need of feeling alive by

physically touching one another on Sunday services. Hang on beloveds, hang on to hope, hang on to what is to come for us in 2021.

Let us not allow the Herods of our time to follow them into their fake sense of homage. Where is this church that rises out of the ashes? Let us carry on from last week and be like the prophets like Simeon and Anna. Let us be the prophets that point to the Bethlehem of our time – the little church on Iao Valley that could – the little church that would and the little church that did rise up and shined its light for all to see – even from its House churches:

“And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.”

And you Iao church, in the land of Maui are by no means least among the people of this earth. For from you shall be the Christ, our shepherd who continues to shine bright through your church. Beloved Iao Church, beloved brothers and sisters out in our virtual world. Let us close with this. These are the words we shall send back to the Herods of our time. We are the light that shines forth over our beloved Iao church. We follow in the footsteps of the Christ child purified by Simeon last week. We not only follow, but

we allow the light of Christ to shine forth through our church. We may not have much to give or to offer – but we give you all we have. We give you all the love we have – for that is the greatest treasure chest we have to offer ALL of God’s people today.

Amen, Amene, Ashe, A-ho, and Alleluia.