

**KAILUA CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2024  
“THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT”  
Rev. Irene Willis Hassan  
Scripture reading: Galatians 5:13-26**

**Galatians 5:13-26**

**13 For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters, only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence,[c] but through love become enslaved to one another. 14 For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 15 If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.**

**16 Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, 21 envy,[d] drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**

**22 By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. 24 And those who belong to Christ[e] have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another.**

**Sermon: The Fruits of the Spirit**

**So, this might sound weird... but I don't think anything we did this summer matters. Now, before you go jumping down my throat with: “then why did you make us do all that, Pastor Irene?!” I want to focus just on one word from that sentence: *did*. “Did” is an action word: a physical movement of time, space, and resources. What I specifically mean is the *action* didn't matter – the intention did.**

**We could have done any number of things to revitalize this church, and the things themselves wouldn't have mattered. We could have (and still could!) built a community garden, hosted a wine tasting festival or a homeless services fair; we could have done anything centered on loving our neighbors as ourselves, and it would have still had the same results.**

**Our summer internship program was a tool, a means to an end. It was designed to bring new energy and life into our worship services, and it has indeed succeeded in doing so. The program was a tremendous success, and we are now reaping the benefits of increased attendance and deeper commitment from our members. The accomplishments of this program wasn't about the program itself. The true benefit, the real transformation, comes from the intention behind it, the fruits of the Spirit that guided us as we worked together.**

**Paul reminds us in Galatians that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." And it is this fruit—the inner transformation that comes from living in the Spirit—that truly matters, not merely the specific actions or programs we undertake.**

**This summer was successful because the fruits of the Spirit were not just a backdrop to our planning; they were the driving force. When we gathered to craft this program, we did so with a spirit of love and faithfulness. Our patience was challenged with each other many times, yet, the Spirit prevailed in keeping us stable in our conversations and actions. The spirit of generosity was alive in the planning of this program, as we came together to entirely repurpose the church building, wake up early on Saturdays to interview students, come suddenly in the evenings to battle church ghosts and kids with water balloons. We navigated challenges with the fruits of the Spirit as our protection, and our commitment to goodness and faithfulness shone through in every decision we made. This is what truly attracted success to our efforts—not the specifics of the program but the spirit in which we undertook it.**

**Paul's letter to the Galatians is clear: our freedom in Christ means we are called to live by the Spirit, and when we do, we bear fruit that testifies to that freedom. Our church has always thrived when we operate from the Spirit. We have seen it time and again—whether it was through this summer's program or through various other initiatives throughout this church's history. The freedom we experience in Christ is evident when we let the fruits of the Spirit guide our actions, and others are drawn to that freedom.**

**Where the Spirit is alive, so is a thriving church, no matter what "action" is at hand at any given time. Many of you know Nani Oda, a beloved member of our congregation who has 70 years worth of stories of the Spirit working in this place since the time it was just a coconut grove in a valley. Throughout her journey with our church, from the building of this church, to supporting Pastor Dale in shaping KCC's identity in the 1990s, and now in her ongoing service, Nani is a living testament to what it means to be filled with the Spirit, no matter what present "action" is occurring in our church.**

**Nani recounted to me that the building of this church required those same fruits of patience, joy, self-control, and generosity that we used to build the internship program this summer. She smiles at the memories of the men coming home from a long day of work just to turn around and come to the church to haul beams and stack mortar. She recalls the children running around giving cold cokes to the workers. She remembers the fruits of the Spirit that came together to do a hard thing in constructing this massive building based almost entirely on volunteer time and donations, and recognizes that that period of the church was one of transformational success through the empowerment Christ gives us.**

**Nani and others have recounted a time to me when Pastor Dale was a young new pastor of this church in the 90s and he often did things quite different than what they were used to, like doing basketball outreach ministry with young men in the community instead of sitting in his office taking appointments. Nani was alive in the fruits of the Spirit to encourage and celebrate Pastor Dale's unique style – she stood up to the grumblers against Pastor Dale and insisted that the Spirit stay alive in his ministry over and beyond the stifling expectations that some may have had of him**

during that time. Nani has always insisted that we look for the Spirit in everything we do as a church.

Even in the present day, her joy, patience, kindness, and unwavering faithfulness have been a beacon for us all. Every person here lights up with her contagious joy when she walks into the sanctuary, and when she's unable to be here in worship, her absence is heavily noticed because of all the Spirit she carries with her. Nani's life reminds us that the fruits of the Spirit are not just abstract concepts but living, breathing realities that we experience when we surrender ourselves to Christ. Nani reminds us that we need that Spirit here to truly accomplish what we set out to do in Christ's name.

As we move forward, no matter what we do, we have to remember the Spirit that Nani exemplifies. Whether we continue with our internship program or embark on new initiatives, let us remember this: It's not the program, the event, or the action that matters most—it's the intention and the Spirit in which we undertake it. In everything we do, let us commit to nurturing the fruits of the Spirit, for it is through this that we will continue to see growth, success, and transformation in our church community.

May we always strive to live by the Spirit, bearing the fruits of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This is how we truly honor God and attract others to the freedom we have in Christ. Let us keep these fruits alive in all our endeavors, and we will witness not just success but true, lasting transformation.

Amen.