



Our Lady of Kea'au

December 2008/January 2009

Thanksgiving. The Thanksgiving celebration at Our Lady of Kea'au was typical in many respects. There was a lavish festive meal shared by family and friends and guests. There was relaxation and entertainment. The dining room was especially beautiful with seasonal decorations. There were left-overs aplenty, and no one left empty handed. But our Thanksgiving was different in many profound and important ways. It was a very ecumenical gathering. Pastor Kaleo Patterson and a large group from Kawaiaha'o Church participated fully. A musical group from their Church strolled among the tables singing Hawaiian favorites. Recognizing the importance of the day, and perhaps out of respect for Our Lady, too, most of our homeless were appropriately and attractively dressed. In truth, some of our Wednesday volunteers didn't at first recognize people they see every week! It was truly a joyous day.

Activities. Part of the mission at OLK is hospitality. Fewer groups have been financially able to schedule events at our facility. Understandably, we've seen a decrease in reservations. Still, our outreach continues. In November, we hosted 300 people from the Waianae Coast Comprehensive Center's Healing in Hawaii program as well as a group from Sacred Hearts Church in Waianae.

Advent Retreat. Once again, the Advent season began with a special retreat, directed by Father George De Costa from Hilo. Joey Camacho was the musician in residence. The retreat began Friday, November 28, with Evening Prayer at 6 p.m., followed by a welcoming conference and heavy snacks. Saturday's events included spa activities such as massage and healing touch. A Service of Reconciliation followed dinner on Saturday. The Retreat concluded with Sunday Brunch, following Mass and the final conference session.

God's Blessings. An anonymous donor gave us a propane-powered rice cooker that will cook 20 pounds of rice at a time. This was a wonderful convenience in preparing for Thanksgiving and it's proved very useful when we prepare meals for the homeless on Wednesdays. James Wong and family made a generous cash donation and brought numerous pumpkin pies. Snowbird neighbors in Makaha learned of our program and made a sizeable cash donation. Visitors from Alaska noted the many dogs providing security and companionship for the homeless and brought a 50-pound bag of dog food for us to distribute. Electricians who have done many jobs for us have contributed a freezer and also \$50,000.

Christmas Festivities. Once again, the end of the year will be especially festive at OLK. The staff party on Thursday, Dec. 18, featured a pot-luck luncheon, seasonal-themed games and a gift grab-bag. On Christmas Eve afternoon, the Wednesday crew distributed gift boxes to many homeless families in addition to lunch. Later that day, Father Soltis from St. Philomena celebrated Christmas Mass. Our holiday meal was sumptuous, and the star above the longhouse shone brightly in the unexpectedly clear sky. On January 3, the holiday season came to a close with the Three Kings Day celebration. Father Mark celebrated Mass at 5 p.m. Then the Three Kings offered each person a saint for the year, a service virtue to reflect upon and a Biblical consideration. Following custom, dinner followed and a new tradition was begun: re-gifting; instead of purchasing something for one member of our ohana, we passed something on that we received and didn't want, couldn't use or thought deserved a better home. As before, the packages were decorated in a way to reflect the recipient's identity. Guessing the intended recipients increased the merriment.

Weather-Related Problems. The storm in early December was fierce, and it helped us remember how blessed we are compared to our homeless neighbors. The raging flow of water washed out a bridge on our grounds and exposed a channel that had been hardened years ago when the bank owned the property, a leak sprang in the chapel and the heavy rain caused other minor problems. All of these, however, were things that could be repaired. We were grateful that Randy Namahala made sure we had a functioning generator because, like everyone else, we lost power in a subsequent storm.

It is interesting to note that the taro and tapioca garden that Esau has planted in the area being cleared for the Ahupua'a survived the flood intact. However the Hawaiian garden near the labyrinth did not fare so well. Seeing how the various areas drained or washed out makes us rethink a tentative plan to offer housing in buses parked on the lower grounds of Our Lady.

Cell-Phone Tower. In December a cell-phone antenna tower was installed on the grounds of OLK. In addition to the welcome monthly rental income, the white box on the pole beside our front gate makes it easier to tell visitors how to find us the first time. Sometimes it's difficult to notice the brass plaque on the rocks beside the gate; the big white box is unsightly but it is eye-catching—particularly if someone is driving a bit too fast.

Labyrinth. In the Fall of 2006, Kim Patterson designed a large, outdoor labyrinth and it was installed on our grounds by a group of Episcopalians from St. Andrews Cathedral. A distinguishing feature, the labyrinth at Our Lady is a round, medieval style lay-out. It is one of only a dozen or so labyrinths in the entire state. Visitors enjoy walking it in prayer or contemplation. Once in a while, we get visitors who come specifically to experience the labyrinth. It has been mentioned in magazines and on line so we can expect more visitors.

A maze is not the same as a labyrinth, by the way. Mazes are puzzles, created to amuse and annoy. There are usually choices in the pathway, and a person does not always succeed at reaching the goal. In a labyrinth, on the other hand, there is only one pathway from the entrance to the goal, although the path twists and turns. Thus, a labyrinth is an apt metaphor for the spiritual path we follow, at Our Lady of Kea'au and in our daily lives.

Swimming Pool. At Thanksgiving, our guests from the homeless community, who live in very close proximity to the ocean, were excited at the opportunity to take a dip in our fresh-water pool. Michael Felles graciously volunteered to serve as lifeguard, and of course we insisted that users shower before entering. Watching and listening from the lanai, one might have confused this scene with an upscale resort. Now, that image is being enhanced, thanks to the generosity of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. As part of their renovation, they are replacing all their pool furniture, and they have offered Our Lady 35 almost new lounge chairs. Upgrading the pool was not even in the OLK budget. As Sister Beatrice often observes, "The Lord will provide."

Website. To read more about our Thanksgiving celebration and to see many pictures, please check our website www.ourladyofkeaa.org. The website is frequently updated with current news and announcements of activities. You'll find many resources on the website that will give additional insight into our mission and how we try to achieve it. In addition to back issues of the newsletter, pictures of the artwork at OLK, scenes of our volunteers in action and the like, there's also a page for prayer requests and links to a variety of interesting, relevant websites.

Name the Newsletter. Our newsletter deserves its own identity. Please help us create a catchy, appropriate name. All suggestions will be considered, and we have a nifty prize for the person whose suggestion is selected. By the way, if you suggest a Hawaiian name, please provide a translation and explanation.

Volunteer Opportunities. There's always something interesting to do at Our Lady of Kea'au. Because guests enjoy using the swimming pool, certified lifeguards are always needed. Do you have mechanical aptitude? The electric vehicles (golf carts) require a lot of maintenance! Perhaps you can help restore the Hawaiian garden. The sisters and staff would enjoy a home-cooked meal from your kitchen. Whatever your skills, whatever your interests, they can surely benefit Our Lady of Kea'au. Please call 696-7255 to volunteer.

**Our Lady of Kea'au is a subsidiary of St. Francis Healthcare System.
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