

100 YEARS TALK (Final event)
Written by Jo Piltz

A little over 100 years ago, the St. James' Mission held its first services in the tiny new chapel sited in the middle of town between the old Court House and the Parker Ranch office. The building was a labor of love, supported by ten families, the Parker family, and their priest, Father Merrill. We've already heard about the priests' journeys on horseback over the Kohala Mountains in order to provide a monthly communion service and sermon to the tiny mission even after the chapel was moved to this property around 1930. But how was that little building used on the intervening Sundays? What were those services and who led them?

The usual Sunday liturgy then, even in city churches, was different from what we experience today. As late as the 1950s, the normal service at St. Andrew's Cathedral, on most Sundays was Morning Prayer. But with a priest available only on one Sunday per month, who provided leadership for the Morning Prayer services held all the other Sundays in that tiny Waimea chapel? In many ways, the first St. James' mission was like the earliest congregations in Asia Minor visited by St. Paul, and the important job of leading services here fell to the Lay Readers or the heads of families. That first little building provided a place for weekly Sunday school classes, for weekly Morning Prayer services, and, with the assistance of a priest from North Kohala, for the necessary special services of Baptism, marriage, and funerals.

This situation should have a familiar ring to those of us who remember those times at St. James' when we were in "search mode" in 1980 or 1997 or 2003 or 2010. Times had changed, and the congregation looked forward every Sunday to a celebration of Holy Eucharist, and a generous cadre of visiting priests provided us with that gift. Best of all, being without a priest in residence right before this centennial challenged our congregation to discover and exercise opportunities for ministry, a challenge that would have been recognized by the founders of St. James'.

The church is not a building or property. This church began with no money, no land, no building, but it was rich in the faith of its people. That nucleus of believers built so much of what we enjoy today. They dreamed of a tiny church to house their small congregation and Sunday school. Their children hoped for land to call their own where they could bury family members and eventually build a bigger church. Those accomplishments shaped the challenges that we have inherited. Thanks to those believers, we live in God's house by the side of the road, as Sam Walter Foss wrote, to "be a friend to man." That is a great gift and an even greater challenge.

What gifts will we pass on to those members of St. James' who have yet to be born? A centennial year is a moment in time for consideration. A time to look back on and learn from the achievements of the first hundred years, and a time to consider where God wants us to begin the dreams for those who will be here one hundred years from now. A centennial is that magical half hour of silence in heaven after the Lamb broke the Seventh

Seal, but our silence is broken with questions rather than storms or trumpets of Revelations 8.

One hundred years ago, the people of St. James' could never have imagined the world we live in now—world without planes or technology or cures for the diseases that carried off their children, but what will be the technology of 2113? Will this building, built in 1950-51 still stand or will the services be held in a newer building? Will Global Warming bring the ocean level higher up our slopes, and will our village have grown to a city? Those are the challenges of the future, and with God's help, we will meet them.

(No backs--Pass it on.)