

**2020  
Almost  
History,  
But ...**  
Pandemic waylays  
the hopes of a year.  
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**Have You  
Lost Your  
Faith**  
Certainly a year filled  
with challenge:  
Filipinos share their  
journey of faith.  
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**Hope,  
Peace  
Love & Joy**  
Real gifts we  
should look  
forward to.  
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# Fil-Am Voice

Magkaisa Tayong Lahat | “Let Us All Unite”

December 2020 • Vol 4 No12 | FILIPINO AMERICAN VOICE • UPLIFTING OUR COMMUNITY | FREE

## inside



Pinoy’s penchant to give  
and sacrifice during such  
an unlucky year.  
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And through it all ... “unto  
thee is born a saviour.”  
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What’s in a word?  
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A good majority of our most previous issues of 2020 has reported on the effects the Pandemic has had on our lives.  
ILLUSTRATION: FIL-AM VOICE STAFF

## Goodbye 2020

Alfredo G. Evangelista | ASSISTANT EDITOR

**C**ue Fade in ... And that was 2020.  
Oh what a Year it was. Who would have thought our lives would be turned upside down and health was number one on everyone’s mind?  
Actually, in the December 2019 issue of the *Fil-Am Voice*, while Marilyn Oura listed “good health” as one of her hopes and  
had health as their number one concern: “My dreams are that my children will be able to have good health,” said Nora Cabanilla-Takushi. Melen Magbual Agcolicol expressed hopes that “my family will always stay healthy”  
see **GOODBYE** next page

**FREE**



Emmanuel Baltazar and his wife Eliza Cruz Feig Baltazar pose next to a statue of Mary during the Diocesan Convention of Filipino Catholic Clubs in Hawai’i held on Maui.  
PHOTO COURTESY MANNY BALTAZAR

## Have Faith

*It’s easy to maintain your faith when times are good, but in challenging times—such as the Pandemic we’re now in—our faith gets tested and is proven to be true or false.*

Vanessa Joy Domingo

**H**as the past year caused you to question your faith and your belief system? From experiencing the horrors of a global pandemic, hardship for those who were unemployed for the past eight months, to grief from losing a loved one this year does your faith still shine though?  
Do you feel your faith is measured by your attendance at church? For Emmanuel “Manny” Alegre Baltazar, his biggest challenge was adjusting to COVID-19 restrictions when it came to his daily routine of attending church at the Christ the King Catholic Church in Kahului. “Initially, going to church every Sunday and even other days of the week is my routine schedule. It’s hard for  
see **FAITH** p.3





Nora Cabanilla-Takushi



Melen Magbual Agcolicol



Marilyn Oura



Florante Garcia



Essie Arruiza



Elizabeth Ayson

## Goodbye ...

from p. 1

dreams. Flor Garcia resolved “to stay fit and healthy” while Essie Arruiza included “To be in a better health” as one of her resolutions.

But perhaps Elizabeth Ayson said it best: “At the top of the list is continued good health. Without health, little else is feasible.”

Indeed, without health, everything that was normal stopped. Traveling, in-person meetings, work, school, gatherings, sports events—the list is endless.

And new things became the norm—masks, hand sanitizers, temperature checks, social distancing, virtual meetings with perhaps the most popular via ZOOM, drive-by graduations, and unfortunately, a lot more.

In the March 2020 issue, the *Fil-Am Voice* began covering the COVID-19 pandemic with a Feature story titled The Corona Virus—A Public Health Situation Constantly Changing. Sadly, COVID-19 was either the Lead Story or the Feature story (or for some

months, an extended Lead Story) for almost every ensuing month (elections ruled in the June 2020 issue).

The April 2020 extended Lead Story was titled: We Are All Affected—COVID-19 Disrupts Our Lives while the May 2020 extended Lead Story was titled: Our Disrupted Year—Maui’s Graduating High School Seniors Share How COVID-19 Has Affected Their Final Year of High School and the July 2020 extended Lead Story was titled: Behind the Scenes.

The August 2020 Feature Story was titled: SPORTS—On Timeout, Postponed or (Gasp) Canceled? while the September 2020 Lead Story was titled: Coping with Distance Learning—Students, Teachers and Parents Struggle to Cope.

The October 2020 Lead Story was titled: Businesses Survive During a Pandemic—Key Words of Advice: Ask Questions, Budget, Be Patient, Keep Your Customers Happy while the November 2020 Feature Story was titled The Pandemic Dampens the Holiday Season—COVID Doesn’t Take a Holiday.

Yes, we are consumed by the

COVID-19 pandemic—and for good reason. Hawai‘i’s economy that is heavily reliant on tourism suffered and Maui had one of the highest unemployment rates in the country. Not only were the hotels shut down but many small businesses reliant on the visitor industry were severely affected; the government rules also shut down non-essential businesses and when they were allowed to re-open, many were at reduced capacity.

On the island of Maui, as of early December, there were 600 cases, and sadly 17 deaths. (The statewide total as of early December was 18,527 cases with 262 deaths. Nationally, the total was almost 15 million cases with over 282,000 deaths.)

Sadly, our governments’ responses were not always on the same page. From the White House to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to the state and local governments. In Hawai‘i, Governor David Ige issued a stay at home order for the entire state in late March. Later, the Governor relinquished some of the control to the Mayors but retained final approval of certain responses.

On Maui, the COVID-19 response has been led by Mayor Michael Vic-



“... It feels like 2020 has been one crisis after another,” said Maui County Mayor Michael Victorino.

PHOTO COURTESY OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

torino.

“This year began with great promise, but by March we knew Maui County would be faced by historic challenges. From a once-in-a-century global pandemic, to raging brushfires, to distance learning, to record unemployment, it feels like 2020 has been one crisis after another,” said Victorino. “The COVID-19 pandemic has come in clusters of cases over the course of several months. Now we’re suffering from COVID fatigue. But we should also be grateful that the people of Maui County have pulled together to get through this the best we can. As island people, we understand that the actions of one affect everyone. So, I’m very proud of the aloha that’s been demonstrated throughout our community this past year.”

### The Aloha Spirit was challenged throughout the year

Stay at home; wear a mask; six feet apart; wash your hands; sanitize; quarantine. These words instantly became part of our vocabulary. Social media became an easy way for folks to express doubt the pandemic was real or to easily criticize the actions of government leaders and on Maui, the hospital. The failure of the State Department of Labor and Industrial Re-

see GOODBYE p.4



“Too many Hawai‘i workers have waited for months, and worse, remain in limbo waiting to get some response or explanation for processing [unemployment insurance] delays or claim denials,” said Sen. Gil Keith-Agaran

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Jorge and Samantha Riglos.  
PHOTO COURTESY SAMANTHA RIGLOS



Samantha Riglos and her husband Jorge baptizing Jorge's sister, Leslie.  
PHOTO COURTESY SAMANTHA RIGLOS



Alvin and Michelle Acosta.  
PHOTO COURTESY MICHELLE ACOSTA

## Faith...

from p. 1

me to not go to church as my worship place to thank and praise God.” Manny needed to adjust to restrictions decreasing the number of parishioners allowed to attend and requiring a reservation system. He felt the weight of his responsibilities as an involved member of their church. “I had to ensure that every protocol and guideline were strictly followed. It was important to educate every parishioner. Communicating with them about our new guidelines was the challenging part. But as days passed, parishioners became more aware and equipped with knowledge and instructions on making the worshipping at much better and safer during this pandemic.”

The restrictions, however, did not make him feel any less close to his faith. “I never found any conflict between my beliefs and my experience so far in 2020. I believe that God can do all possible things. With COVID-19, I learned to bring myself closer to God by reading the Bible at home and meditating in our house altar.”

Christian Samantha Riglos and her husband Jorge also went from actively attending large fellowship gatherings to reinforcing their faith in smaller groups. “God created us to be in relationship with one another and it was hard not being able to do life with people like how we are used to. During the beginning of the pandemic, we

had to see how things played out as far as what we could and couldn’t do for gatherings. We wanted to gather and have fellowship but at the same time, we needed to do our part to keep each other safe by not gathering in big groups.”

In May, the couple celebrated their first wedding anniversary and recognized the strength in their bond lies in their shared faith and religion. “We both understand that no matter what life throws at us (yes, even a worldwide pandemic) that God is sovereign over our lives. That God is a loving Father who really does take care of us and loves us immensely. I feel like we don’t really have a ‘worry bone’ in our body because we know who our God is. Our relationship with God, individually and as a married couple, is what keeps us going every day. We live for the one who gave His life for us.”

With our daily routines being disrupted by the pandemic and unemployment forcing people to stay home—some have experienced the challenge of finding themselves again through their faith. Alvin Acosta expressed his difficulty with his financial struggles and finding faith in what he was experiencing. “I was temporarily laid off from my job for eight months not knowing how I can provide my family rent and food. We had to wait months until we started receiving our UI (Unemployment Insurance), but it was not enough to provide our essential needs. My wife (Michelle Acosta)

see FAITH p.5



Alvin Acosta performing with music ministry for virtual services.  
PHOTO COURTESY MICHELLE ACOSTA



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Behind the scenes with Michelle Acosta with media ministry for virtual services.  
PHOTO COURTESY MICHELLE ACOSTA





## From the Editor's Desk

Vince Bagoyo, Jr.  
EDITOR & PRESIDENT • FIL-AM VOICE

# The Meaning of Christmas

Reason to Celebrate ...



The Holy Nativity during a Christmas Pageant at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

# 2020

was a challenging year due to the pandemic that altered the way we celebrate special holidays like not meeting in person with our families and friends for dinner. Despite the health risks for a face-to-face gathering, many are choosing to continue traditional family celebrations, willing to face whatever the consequences that may follow.

For millions of believing Christians in the world, Christmas is the most significant time of the year which returns us to the birth of Christ in the age-old telling of the baby, born to Mary who is taken by her husband Joseph to the town of Bethlehem where there is no room at the inn. Fortunately, they find shelter and baby Jesus has a manger for His first sleep on Earth. Three wise men travel from afar to bring gifts to the infant, in

joyful response to the Good News brought to them by angels announcing the arrival of the Son of God, sent to Earth to bring salvation to all who choose the path to heaven.

Over the centuries since His birth, Christmas continues to bring hope, joy, and love to the people, serving as a symbol of faith and a year-round reminder that all of us can live in the way of Christ. Perhaps the most important impact of Christmas is how it cements the core of meaning to our efforts to become the very best of who we are, that angel trumpet that calls us throughout the year to face every decision, large and small, with the highest and best within our own humanity. Every soul gives personal meaning to life experience and with each experience can come a deeper, more profound expression of what it means to walk like Christ on the path of hope, joy and love, which when

see FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK p. 6

## Goodbye ...

from p. 2

lations to timely process all the claims for unemployment insurance did not help and forced the resignation of the Director. (The failure of the State Department of Health to be transparent about contact tracing led to the retirement of the Director of Health.)

“While the Labor Department over the last year delivered a tremendous amount of benefits to an unprecedented number of claimants, too many Hawai'i workers have waited for months, and worse, remain in limbo waiting to get some response or explanation for processing delays or claim denials,” observed State Senator Gil Keith-Agaran. “While DLIR can blame an antiquated computer system that in retrospect the administration and we in the Legislature should have modernized earlier, the number of people who have never heard back from a real person shows the limits of technology alone in delivering massive services. If people had a bad view of government bureaucracy, I'm afraid the UI situation has only confirmed that for many residents.”

In addition to the high rate of unemployment insurance claims, there has been a significant increase in Medicaid beneficiaries. “As you may be aware, about 63,000 Hawai'i residents have become Medicaid beneficiaries since the pandemic began,



“Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, I made a decision to stay on the island of Maui despite having plans of moving out of the island,” said Romelyn Joy Tabangcura.

PHOTO COURTESY ROMELYN TABANGCURA

and for all intents and purposes, classes were canceled—albeit virtual classes were held.

The May 2020 Lead Story featured the first-person accounts of forty high school seniors whose graduation ceremonies were canceled.

Romelyn Joy Tabangcura (who co-authored the article with Ghenesis Balaan) is now a college freshman at UH Maui College. “Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, I made a decision to stay on the island of Maui despite having plans of moving out of the island. My family and I agreed that it would be much safer to stay back for my freshman year since we didn't know how the virus would play out at the time of my decision,” said Tabangcura. “At first I was sad that I couldn't start my college career in the most traditional way, but looking back, I'm glad I was able to stay since I had the chance to spend more time with my family and save money as well. I'm currently doing online school which taught me a lot about diligence and the importance of prioritizing. In the upcoming year, I plan to complete my freshmen year on Maui for the spring semester.”



Zyra Delacruz was deprived of graduation ceremonies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

PHOTO COURTESY ZYRA DELACRUZ

bringing the statewide total of beneficiaries to more than 390,000,” reported Judy Mohr Peterson, the Administrator of the MED QUEST division. “This represents a 19 percent increase in statewide enrollment from a year ago. The increase is most pronounced in Maui county and Kaua'i county, where the increases are up nearly 21 percent and 19 percent, respectively, over the same time last year.”

## Classes canceled; Drive-through graduations; College Plans on Hold; Teachers Stressed

With the outbreak of the pandemic, the Spring Break was extended

Ethan Evangelista had plans to attend the University of Nevada, Las Vegas but COVID-19 interrupted. He decided to stay at home, taking online courses through the University of Hawai'i Maui College. His sister Haile is a Junior at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. Because Haile's classes were all on-line, she opted to stay home during the pandemic.

Like the high school graduates, Zyra Delacruz was deprived of graduation ceremonies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. “Not being able to have a graduation ceremony was a big disappointment to my family and me. Graduating from college

see GOODBYE p.10



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Princess Bumanglag Cainguitan playing bells for Good Shepherd Episcopal Church.  
PHOTO: BASILIA EVANGELISTA



Princess Bumanglag Cainguitan (lower left corner) participates as a leader for the weekly virtual Compline service led by the Youth and Young Adults of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church.  
PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

## Faith...

from p. 3

and I experienced a mix of emotions during the pandemic. At first, we did feel conflict between our beliefs and what we were experiencing. We grew up attending Sunday services in the chapel and it was a whole different system that we had to face,” he explains. Changing from in-person to virtual services felt odd to them. Like Manny, they felt closer to their faith by being able to go to their church in person. “If we didn’t have the pandemic, we feel that it’s better to experience sharing our religious faith in person because we are able to share and preach the Gospel throughout the world by sharing and inviting people to attend our services and to have salvation.”

This year, Alvin and his wife Michelle took the opportunity to become part of the music and media ministry of their church—Christian Pentecostal Missionary Church of Christ—4thWatch. “We knew doing the work of God will bring us closer to Him.” Together, they took part in broadcasting and reaching out to other parishioners online. He feels that doing so not only helped their relationship with God but also each other. “Be strong even during this hardship trials. We know that it is difficult living in this pandemic, however, be steadfast and have faith. Our religion helped both of us to get through 2020 by building strong relationships together with God. We believe that through Him everything is possible.”

Like Alvin, Princess Bumanglag Cainguitan of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Wailuku struggled with the economic uncertainties and being unemployed because of the pandemic. “It’s stressful because we are all unsure about when the economy will re-

cover. We are fortunate to live here on Maui because there are nonprofit organizations that extend help to those in need. During these difficult times, it is key for us to help one another. Hopefully, the economy can recover, and everyone can go back to work soon.”

Her faith did not waver in the face of her financial experiences. “I believe that in life, things happen for a reason. God has a purpose and gives us lesson for all our downfalls, it is key to trust His purpose. Our experiences will mold us to become better versions of ourselves and make us stronger for our next battles,” she explained.

Being involved in her church as a young adult helped strengthen her belief system. Her church provided activities and opportunities to help kids and young adults to share and discuss a variety of topics. Although she is not as involved as she used to be, she does appreciate being able to attend worship services and a weekly Compline service led by her church’s youth and young adults streamed on Facebook by her church. “A lesson that I want to remind other people is to appreciate the little things in life in our lives. The year 2020 may have changed our lives drastically but it is important to still be grateful. It can be as simple as showing gratitude to those who work as frontlines in retail, restaurant or supermarkets when they assist you. Appreciating the little things in life helps for us to have a positive outlook in our day.”

As the head of the family, Paul Chua a parishioner of Christ the King Catholic Church was concerned about being able to provide for his wife, Geraldine and his daughter, Gabby. “I work in the hotel and being the head of the family I felt so stressed ... and feel like I was a burden to the family ... and what if I can’t totally get back to work ... How can I provide for my

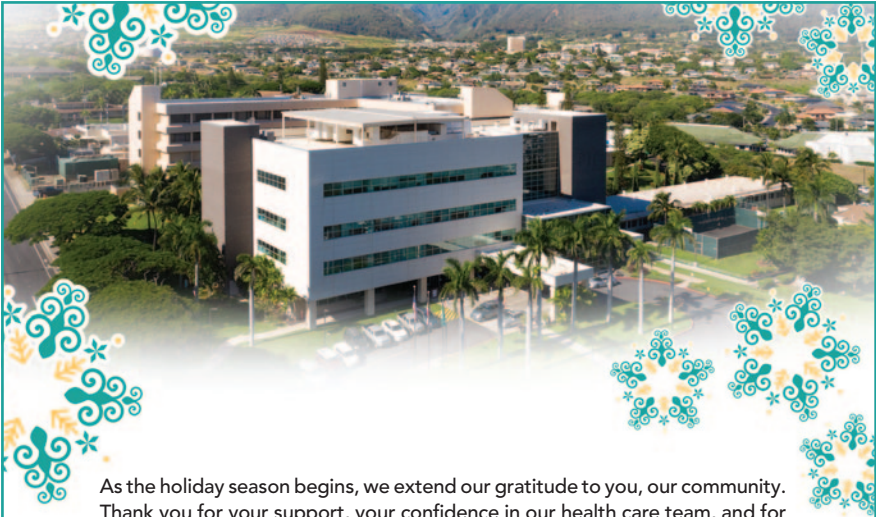
family? Those are the things I kept thinking about.”

Despite the stress and worry, Paul and his wife kept faith. “Our faith and beliefs are our strongest weapons to fight whatever struggles that we are facing with the crisis. Through prayer we know that we can surpass the pandemic crisis. We keep our faith and beliefs to Him. We know that He’ll not give us any struggles if He know that we can’t survive it. Keep believing in Him.” They aim to instill the same beliefs in their daughter and focus on how prayer and faith in God has made them stronger together as a family. “We have our own struggles in life but keeping our family together helped us in overcoming these tests. Don’t let

see FAITH p.13



The Chua family on one of their hikes taken during the pandemic.  
PHOTO COURTESY GERALDINE CHUA



As the holiday season begins, we extend our gratitude to you, our community. Thank you for your support, your confidence in our health care team, and for helping to keep all of us safe and healthy by wearing your mask, washing your hands, and avoiding crowds.

Maui Health continues to work around the clock to ensure we are always prepared to take care of everyone who needs our care.

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For more information on our preparedness efforts, visit [mauihealth.org/safe](https://mauihealth.org/safe).

On behalf of your Maui Health care team, have a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season.

**Merry Christmas**

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# From the Editor's Desk

Cont'd from p. 4



Angels, shepherds and wise men surround the Holy Family.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

experienced together as a community, leads us closer to each other and to God.

For some, the glorious offerings of gifts brought by the three wise men is an enjoyable practice that is shared easily by families, friends and associates of all ages, in a wide variety of human connections. Christmas is not just exchanging gifts but more of a time to remember the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came to earth to save those who are lost. He is the only bridge to our Father in Heaven (John 14:6).

The greatest gift we can share during this Christmas holiday is to give love, joy and hope to others, especially by helping those who are less fortunate, at a time when showing compassion is even more meaningful and appreciated. The virus brings us to a new normal, where virtual ZOOM meetings are the best means to communicate with our loved ones, to avoid its predictable spread. The Christmas plan for my wife and me in 2020 is to spend face-to-face time with our children and grandchildren and to let them know how much we love and care for them. I can hardly wait to give them each a big hug and to read their favorite Christmas story as they listen closely, nearby.

The custom of gifts in this sacred season is infused with greater meaning within the context of the

first gifts for the Christ child, where this custom began as a way to convey to each other the love, care and affection we share, especially through those difficult times of trials and challenges, so often unexpressed—even when deeply felt and greatly appreciated.

**The greatest gift we can share during this Christmas holiday is to give love, joy and hope to others, especially by helping those who are less fortunate ...**

What a year it has been! Now the world news reports give us reason to believe we can look forward to a New Year, with its promise for compassion, empathy, honesty and the strengths of diversity in our new national leadership. As we hope with all our hearts for a unified nation, re-establishing long friendships with other countries around the globe uplifts our collective human spirit. With hands and hearts together, we can choose again to work as one, for the betterment of all humanity. Here's to 2021!

As we celebrate Christmas this year, it is a time to reflect and remember what is really important in life—family, friends, neighbors, co-workers and yes, most of all, even a stranger.

To all our readers, have a Blessed Christmas and a Hopeful New Year! ✨

*Vince Bagoyo*

VINCE BAGOYO, JR. | EDITOR

## Community... In Action



Members of the Bahay Kubo Heritage Foundation Board of Directors pose after a brief ceremony.

PHOTOS: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

## COMMUNITY... IN ACTION

*Editor's note: Send your community briefs to [info@filamvoice.com](mailto:info@filamvoice.com). This month's column was compiled by Assistant Editor Alfredo G. Evangelista.*

### BAHAY KUBO HERITAGE FOUNDATION



The Jose Rizal bust at Kepaniwai Heritage Gardens

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

With the renovation of the roof of the Bahay Kubo at Kepaniwai Park completed through a grant from the County of Maui, Department of Parks and Recreation, the next phases will commence according to Zaldy Ugalino, president of the Bahay Kubo Heritage Foundation. Filipino accents will be added, the floor will be stained, and the interior art work will be created, along with the landscape renovations. "There's still a lot of work to be done," explained Ugalino "and we still need volunteers and funds to complete

the renovation. But we've made progress."

Monetary donations can be mailed to Bahay Kubo Heritage Foundation, 32 Hapua Place, Wailuku, HI 96793.

Recently, the Bahay Kubo Heritage Foundation Board of Directors participated in a Rizal Day celebration at Kepaniwai that will be broadcast as part of Binhi at Ani's A Virtual Bayanihan Christmas Celebration, scheduled to air on Binhi at Ani's Facebook page on Sunday, December 20 at 5 p.m.

The bust of Jose Rizal at Kepaniwai was donated to the County of Maui by Mr. and Mrs. A.B. Sevilla in 1979 and (aside from the Jose Rizal statue at the Philippine Consulate) was the first Rizal statue in the State of Hawai'i.

### BINHI AT ANI

Despite the Binhi at Ani Filipino Community Center being closed since March, the Binhi at Ani Board of Directors has been busy with a number of projects.

### #BayanihanFoodDistribution

Thanks to the sponsorship of Maui Food Bank, the County of Maui, Bayer, Maui Gold, Four Sisters Catering and the many volunteers, the Thanksgiving #BayanihanFoodDistribution held at the War Memorial gymnasium parking lot on November 21 distributed 1000 turkeys and 1008 food boxes containing 19,516 canned goods, 8,026 pounds of produce and 3,072 snacks.

The Christmas #BayanihanFoodDistribution will be held at Binhi at Ani Filipino Community Center (780 Onehe'e Avenue—across from Maui Waena Intermediate School) on Saturday, December

see COMMUNITY IN ACTION p.8



The volunteers during the Thanksgiving #BayanihanFoodDistribution

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

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PASAPORTE



How do you safely celebrate what are, at heart, family holidays in a pandemic? While government and health leaders advised caution, apparently a lot of people decided to “chance ’em.” Judging by the amount of travel and gatherings that occurred at Thanksgiving, Christmas likely will be the same. Thanksgiving this year meant an intimate dinner with appropriate social distancing and outside as much as possible—not a sprawling throng of

deep inside, all of humanity knows there’s truth here, whether they want to admit it or not. There’s a joy that comes in Christmas. There’s a season of giving, so people feel this generosity.” For Valley Islanders, it’s not just a seasonal thing. As Bob Hope once quipped, “My idea of Christmas, whether old-fashioned or modern, is very simple: loving others. Come to think of it, why do we have to wait for Christmas to do that?” I’m one of those who like the Christmas holidays.

# DINENGDENG & PINAKBET

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour...

Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran



the extended clan. But prime rib, baked salmon and freshly caught *mū* and ham since no one really craved turkey in our family branch, with North Carolina-style candied yams and bean casserole, banana *lumpia*, blueberry cheesecake, pumpkin crunch, chocolate *haupia* and custard pie.

For all the seasonal protests that consumerism overshadows any real spiritual content in the weeks between Thanksgiving, Christmas and the Epiphany, shopping this year almost takes on a sense of normalcy—even if much of it will be online. Personally, I’ve never done Black Friday (admittedly, I’m one of those last-minute gift shoppers). After large holiday meals, I like hanging at home, reading a new book or graphic novel or watching parts of the Thanksgiving weekend football and basketball games (but no Maui Classic on island this year).

But I admit being annoyed that Barnes & Noble apparently is NOT shipping to non-contiguous parts of the United States—that means Hawai’i. So while I was consciously trying to avoid making Jeff Bezos richer, I ordered some gifts on Amazon.

As I’ve written previously, I tend to lean towards what Christian music artist Chris Tomlin says: “I think that

I have all the Peanuts seasonal cartoons on DVD but it wouldn’t feel the same. A first world problem, I know. I spent most of my youth attending Evangelical churches but I’ve come to appreciate the *Aglipayan* traditions of my Ilokano family. Traditions remain the heart of the holidays. Other customs followed in my family include the Christmas Pageant put on by the children of the Good Shepherd Episcopal Parish and a Carol Sing and Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve—all likely to be observed virtually this year. When the kids are home from college, the Parish Youth usually do some caroling Upcountry and in Central Maui—but with singing banned, we may need to ZOOM. Doris Todd, where I attended elementary school, put on an annual Christmas Program—I still recall the *tour de force* turned in by teacher Leta Carpenter as the Grinch Who Stole Christmas (suitably Christianized).

Filipinos like me get into all-things Christmas. As kids in Pā’ia, we had local grown Cook Pine Christmas trees decorated with bright balls and tinsel. My grandfather would make Filipino lanterns from bamboo, twine, colored crepe paper and some rubber cement. I tried convincing my spouse (a cra-



Christmas Eve services at Good Shepherd Episcopal Church. PHOTO: GILBERT KEITH-AGARAN

dle Episcopalian from Texas) that Filipinos begin playing Christmas carols in September because the Christmas season in the motherland begins in the Autumn. She didn’t buy it. In her view, people should follow the holidays in proper seasonal sequence.

But she was nevertheless amused when my mother left the Christmas lights up on her house for an entire year. My mom got new lights this year—something to brighten these bleak recent months.

I would like to see a Christmas Eve table laden with all the traditional holiday food—curry, *pansit*, baked salmon, sweet Filipino spaghetti, assorted *cancanen*, ham, prime rib and even a little bit of turkey and

gravy. I would expect a lot of leftovers with gatherings still limited to households.

But as this challenging 2020 comes to a close, take time for family and friends and those less fortunate, suffering or grieving during the holiday season.

**As Linus from “A Charlie Brown Christmas” reminds us, the meaning of Christmas remains the hope that comes from gifts of love.**

As Linus from “A Charlie Brown Christmas” reminds us, the meaning of Christmas remains the hope that comes from gifts of love:

*And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)*

*And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.*

*And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.*

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were so afraid.*

*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day*

see FIRST WORLD p.9

## The 2021 Regular Session of the 31st Legislature opens on January 16, 2021

The Maui delegation can be contacted as follows:

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# Ating Kabuhayan

## Faith: In Evidence—Securely Knowing You’re in God’s Hands

John A.H. Tomosot



**The Incredulity of Saint Thomas** by Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, c. 1602  
IMAGE COURTESY WIKIPEDIA (PUBLIC DOMAIN)

A formal definition of faith is “the theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God’s will.” For Christians, this definition is not just words on a page it is a way of life. As a priest, I’ve counseled folk to understand faith is acceptance of what one cannot see but feels and experiences deep within one’s heart. It is seeing with no eyes. I know from the Christian perspective, believing is not seeing. Our life is built on the knowledge God became intimate with us, came to earth, died on a cross, rose again on the third day and then ascended back into heaven. Thus, I know God is very close to me. Perhaps God is close to you too, so close that and perhaps, within you.

Why do I believe? Is it because the “Bible tells me so”? I read about God in Scripture. I understand God became incarnate, intimate and close to me and you. I have faith this is true and I believe. Even before I was ordained in Holy Orders, I had this belief, so it is somewhat ingrained in me. From my belief, the faith I have I try to live. I’ve been tested, even had my doubts. At times in my life, even recently, my secure belief and faith has caused me to have doubts. Earlier in my life, I know there was a period where I lost my faith, asking myself “Can I trust God?” But trust as in all relationships, needs to be built and I continue to pray about having trust in God all the time.

I know many folk want to have physical proof. In the Gospel, there was Thomas—“Doubting Thomas”—one of Jesus’ twelve original disciples. Thomas told them he would not believe unless he saw Jesus and the wounds in his side, hands and feet. So, what was Jesus’ answer to him when

he saw Jesus? “Have you believed me because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (John 20:29). Thomas helped to define faith for those of us who believe. So, faith, over time, has become a theological virtue, whereby one believes what one does not see but knows to be true.

As Christians, we are certainly secure in the feeling, experience and knowledge there is a God and there are rewards for those who continually seek God. I’ve come to know as a Christian all of this is much more than just a belief; it is security. So, Christians are secure in the knowledge when all things come to pass, they will

*“Who has seen the wind?  
Neither I nor you:  
But when the leaves hang trembling,  
The wind is passing through.*

*Who has seen the wind?  
Neither you nor I:  
But when the trees bow down their heads,  
The wind is passing by.”*

— CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

matter what happens, nothing will shake us from them. I’ve preached on how all things happen through God; there is a reason for everything happening in life! So, faith is a security that what is not seen is real.

When you pray, do you tell God everything in your heart and soul? Does God talk to you, answering your prayer? Do you accept what God tells you? Do you know God’s benefits? Do you know it is God’s will and not your own will? Do you listen? Do you have

see EVIDENCE p.10

## Community... In Action | Cont’d from p.6

The Hawai’i National Guard played an important role in the #BayanihanFood Distribution.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA



Students from Kamehameha volunteered.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA

19 from 9 a.m. until supplies last.

To volunteer on Thursday, December 17, Friday, December 18 or Saturday, December 19, please complete the volunteer form at <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfFF3buNYPiGZOcYD-MybPsUXql-nbzV50TBNcnOwrLSL5JANA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0> and contact Volunteer Coordinator Nora Cabanilla-Takushi at (808) 276-8861 or [ntakushi01@yahoo.com](mailto:ntakushi01@yahoo.com). Volunteers are requested to dress in festive Christmas colors or costumes.

To date, the #BayanihanFoodDistribution has raised \$38,572 and distributed 5,313 food boxes including 4,154 plate lunches, 1,000 turkeys, 45,081 canned goods, 56,774 pounds of produce, 2,189

bags of rice, 10,577 packages of noodles, 1,501 dozens of eggs, 1,868 loaves of bread/pan de sal, 5,600 McDonalds certificates, 11,713 beverages, 18,550 snacks, 2,106 containers of spaghetti sauce, 3,600 Maui Gold pineapples, over 2,500 dragon fruit, and other miscellaneous items such as toilet paper, coffee, goat cheese, and masks.

### Kitchen Renovations

Thanks to two grants from the County of Maui, Office of Economic Development (\$25,000 through the Mayor’s Office and \$25,000 through Councilperson Tasha Kama’s office) Binhi at Ani’s Kitchen Renovations is well underway and is expected to be completed this

Volunteers helped load the vehicles with turkeys and food boxes.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA



Jan Paa, Marilyn Oura and Melen Agcolicol made sure the Thanksgiving #Bayanihan FoodDistribution ran smoothly.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA



The installation of a new air conditioning unit (above) in the kitchen by Johnstone Supply Maui started the kitchen renovations.

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA



Employees from Costa Sales & Service (left) delivered Binhi at Ani’s new refrigerator, freezer and gas range.

PHOTO: MELEN AGCOLICOL





Chris Rabang.  
Photo courtesy Chris Rabang

**MAUI FILIPINO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

Congratulations to Chris Rabang, the General Manager of Westin Nanea, who was elected 2021 president of the Maui Filipino Chamber of Commerce.

month. The Kitchen renovations will allow Binhi at Ani to transition from the #BayanihanFoodDistribution to a #BayanihanFeedingProgram on Sundays, in partnership with Maui Food Bank. The #BayanihanFeedingProgram will start on February 7 and Binhi is looking for teams to volunteer to prepare food.

**Takeout Tuesdays**

With the closure of Binhi at Ani Filipino Community Center as of March, Binhi at Ani has no revenues so a fundraising effort was created by Binhi at Ani president Melen Agcolicol. There have been four Takeout Tuesdays which raised over \$10,000. The next Takeout Tuesday will be held on January 26 and will feature a

choice of Al's BBQ Pit steak plate (\$15) or Four Sisters Catering Roast Pork (\$12). Contact Agcolicol at 205-7981 for more information.

**A Virtual Bayanihan Christmas Celebration**

Binhi at Ani will broadcast on Sunday, December 20 at 5 p.m. on its Facebook page: [facebook.com/BinhiatAniFilipinoCommunityCenter](https://facebook.com/BinhiatAniFilipinoCommunityCenter) A Virtual Bayanihan Christmas Celebration, hosted by Chelsea Guzman, the 2021 Miss Maui USA. The virtual event will highlight Christmas, *Sakada* Day (December 20 in the state of Hawai'i) and Rizal Day (celebrated on December 30). Tune in to celebrate!

*First World ...*

from p. 7

*in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2: 1-14 KJV) \**

**Gilbert S.C. Keith-Agaran** grew up in Pā'ia and Kahului. Don't



tell his wife but he still subscribes to the Filipino notion that Christmas songs are entirely appropriate listening in any of the -ber months

(September, October, November, December). He represents Central Maui in the Hawai'i State Senate.

# MAUI NUI STRONG.NET



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## “WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW IF I PLAN TO TRAVEL?”

**MAUINUISTRONG.NET is Maui County's portal for help.** MauiNuiStrong.net offers information and links to help residents, businesses and travelers on Maui, Moloka'i and Lana'i remain resilient and strong through this pandemic.

Stay updated on:

- Traveler Requirements
- COVID-19 testing information
- Maui County's public health emergency rules
- COVID-19 prevention tips
- News, updates and more!

Taking care of each other makes us stronger.

**MAUINUISTRONG.NET**





Goodbye ...

from p. 4

is one of the biggest milestones in my life and not being able to celebrate it with my family felt like a robbery. It doesn't feel like I've graduated because I couldn't walk the line." Delacruz also lost the job she lined up after graduation. "Losing a job that would've jump started my career devastated me because I feel that my hard work was all for nothing and now I have to start all over again."

The September 2020 Lead Story focused on Distance Learning. Students, teachers, and parents were interviewed about how they were coping. Kahului Elementary School teacher Michele Balala felt like it was her "first year of teaching all over again." In September, Balala expressed her concerns: "I am concerned about teacher burn out. I am working every day, including the weekends, to make sure that my lesson plans are ready and also communicating with parents when they have questions. I am also concerned that students might not



"I am concerned about teacher burn out," said Michelle Balala in September. PHOTO COURTESY MICHELLE BALALA

make the learning gains they would in a face-to-face classroom." Now, Balala says "Teachers are worried about bringing students back to school safely and budget cuts."

No tourists; no jobs

The pandemic also highlighted the

State's overreliance on the visitor industry. All the hotels (and their restaurants) closed except for a few that housed the National Guard, leading to massive furloughs and layoffs. Only recently were visitors allowed to travel—with an option for a negative COVID-19 test or a quarantine. Slowly, workers were called back to work at the large hotels. But some, like the Hyatt Regency Maui still had occupancy as low as 20 percent in December! "I am blessed and excited to be back to work. I am fortunate enough to have 40 hours a week and almost back to my normal schedule," said Imelda Delacruz, an employee at Royal Lahaina. "It's been a challenging time throughout this pandemic, but I'm learning how to adjust with the new norm. Unfortunately, the hotels aren't in their full capacity so I feel like I'm working in a ghost town. But, I'm grateful to be working during a pandemic."

In addition to the Royal Lahaina Resort, other Maui hotels that reopened include Andaz Maui, Courtyard by Marriott, Destination Resorts Hawai'i, Fairmont Kealani, Four Seasons Lāna'i, Four Seasons Resort Wailea, Grand Wailea A Waldorf Astoria Resort, Ho'olei at Grand Wailea, Hyatt Regency Maui, Kā'anapali Ali'i, Kā'anapali Beach Hotel, Lahaina Shores, Marriott Residences, Marriott Wailea, Maui Banyan, Maui Beach Hotel, Maui Coast Hotel, Maui Eldorado,

Maui Seaside, Montage Kapalua Bay, Nāpili Shores, The Ritz Carlton, Westin Kā'anapali Ocean Club, Westin Nānea, Westin Ocean Villas and Westin Resort Maui.

**Small businesses suffer**

The pandemic affected not only the hotels but the many businesses that relied on the visitor industry. Those industries that provided entertainment for tourists—such as zipline companies closed. Companies that provided goods and services to hotels were affected and instituted cutbacks in employee time.

Even companies that did not cater to tourists suffered. Caroline Sadiri, a Certified Optician at Aloha Eye Clinic spoke of the new challenges in serving patients during the pandemic. "We reduced our hours by 80 percent for about three months. Even though we're back at 100 percent capacity, there are new protocols to follow. For example, we are very careful when we fit our patients with glasses. Although we have plexiglass barriers, we sometimes still need to touch our patients. And after each patient, we sanitize the areas and every eye glass frame that was touched."

When businesses were reopened, they faced many rules and restrictions and a significant decrease in customers.

"We are keeping our heads above see GOODBYE p.14

Ating Kabuhayan | Cont'd from p.8

Evidence ...

from p. 8

faith?

In the Gospels, Jesus told the disciples and the people who gathered around him, to "have faith like a little child." In my experience, children will accept what is asked of them and then go and do it. As Christians should we question what God wants us to do? I say, yes, we question; after all we are imperfect human beings. Ah but in faith, with belief and trust, we go ahead and do it because we believe in God, who is right here and at one with us in this life!

Finally, this faith, this belief, this trust in God is a verb. It is a verb because we have to act on what we believe; that God is real, that God's Son, as Lord and Savior, is real. That God's Holy Spirit is real and helps us to act. Isn't it like a verb too? You see, God acted first and now compels us, through faith, belief and trust to act!

There is a story, from some sage in ages past, who likened faith to the

wind: we cannot see the wind, we cannot hear the wind unless it blows against something, we can only feel the wind when it touches our skin or rustles our hair. *Kababayan*, faith is like that wind. We cannot see what we believe in, we cannot hear what we believe in unless we open our eyes to the truth but we can sure feel our faith is made real by the joy we feel and experience in our hearts and deep within our souls. In the end, we put our faith in God, who is like the wind, secure in belief and in a trusting acceptance of the One we cannot see but know is real. Like the wind, let this be the truth! ✨



**John A. Hau'oli Tomoso** is a Priest in the Episcopal Diocese of Hawai'i and a retired Social Worker, with 42 years of licensed practice. Born and raised on Maui, he lives in Kahului with his wife Susan D. Tomoso, a retired Educator with 30 years of teaching experience.

"Although we have plexiglass barriers, we sometimes still need to touch our patients. And after each patient, we sanitize the areas and every eye glass frame that was touched."

PHOTO: ALFREDO EVANGELISTA



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December? Where did the time go? If you are having a hard time believing that it’s already the last month of the year, you are not alone. Most of us stayed home so we don’t get this global virus—the COVID-19. Some workers were laid off because their place of work was closed. Others worked because they were so called “essential.” I don’t know about you but I felt like I didn’t accomplish anything this year.

Let’s Talk Pinoy!

Dulce Karen Butay

My planner was blank after March 16, 2020 because it’s either cancelled or postponed indefinitely. Well, regardless, let’s make the most of what is left of the month and finish the

year off great. On this holiday season, let us spend our time with our family, our loved ones and show that even in the face of crisis, it won’t ruin the spirit of Christmas.

Christmas? Well, ready or not, it’s here. The holiday season is here and the year is coming to an end. How are you celebrating Christmas this year? What is the new normal to celebrate the holidays? What’s the most treasured or practical gifts this year? Toilet paper? Clorox wipes? Lysol spray? Gloves? Mask? Whatever you receive, be grateful ... it’s the thought that counts.

LET’S SEE WHAT’S GOING ON with Angel this month and where they will be going next, shall we?

LISA: Oh, perfect! I have a job offer for you.

ANGEL: Oh but you don’t understand, Auntie. It’s complicated.

LISA: Don’t worry Angel. My *masant-ing* (handsome) nephew will take care of you. He will be your Angel. An angel for an Angel. Let’s see if he is available now.

Lisa took out her phone from her bag and entered her pin and started going through her contacts.

LISA: Ah, that Mikong, he didn’t give me his new cellphone number. That boy is always busy. He is always hiding from me. Anyways, I will contact him. I want him to meet you. You are perfect for each other.

Lisa put away her phone. She stood up and took her basket.

LISA: Tell Lydia that I stopped by and I will come back.

Angel walked Lisa out the *pintuan* (door).

ANGEL: *Maraming salamat* (Thank you) Auntie for the vegetables. I will tell Auntie Lydia that you stopped by.

Angel heaved a sigh of relief when she closed the *lukub* (door). “Thank goodness she wasn’t able to call whoever she’s trying to call.”

Meanwhile, Michael watched in astonishment as these men, these homeless men that came out of nowhere to *tulong* (help) him change his flat tire.

“Uncle, uncle! Wait!” He ran after them. He was panting when he finally caught up with them.

MAN: What is it boy? You need more *uffun* (help)?

MICHAEL: I just want to say *daghang salamat* (thank you) Uncle for your *tulungan* (help). I wanna give you something for snack. Here, Uncle.

The man reached out and grabbed the twenty-dollar bill, gazed for a blink and snatched the fifty dollar bill

English	Pilipino	Ilokano	Cebuano	Ilonggo	Ibanag	Kapampangan
Money	Pera	Kwarta	Salapi	Kwarta	Kwartu	Kwalta
Door	Pintuan	Ridaw	Lukub	Ganhaan	Puwerta	Pasbul
Hands	Kamay	Ima	Kamot	Kamot	Lima	Gamat
Morning	Umaga	Bigat	Buntag	Aga	Umma	Abak
Help	Tulungan	Tulong	Tabang	Bulig	Uffun	Saup
Thank you.	Maraming Salamat.	Agyamanak.	Daghang Salamat.	Madamogud nga salamat.	Mabbalo.	Dacal a Salamat.
No	Hindi	Haan	Awan	Indi	Dili	Indi
Car	Sasakyan	Lugan	Sakyanan	Auto	Kotse	Saken
Where?	Saan?	Inno?	Aha?	San o?	Sitaw?	Nokarin?
Hear	Dinig	Dengngeg	Dungug	Dungug	Ginna	Malalam

from Michael’s *kamay* (hand) without hesitation as well.

MAN: Eh, right on boy! You get any more? I stay hungry.

Michael, unprepared as usual, pats down his chest, pats down his pockets.

“Ah, I know,” Michael says as he bent down to his shoe. “I always keep extra *salapi* (money) in my sock just in case of emergencies,” he says to himself. Taking off his shoe and removing his dark damp sock from his bony foot, he pulls out another fifty-dollar bill.” He raises his *ima* (hand) to the air “Yes!” he says and immediately is snatched in thin air by the man.

“Oh, dili (no)! He’s going to hurt me now! He knows I have some kwarta (money) ...

Michael smirks and gives a thumbs up.

Man begins to walk away and then turns around.

Michael’s demeanor quickly changes from calm, back to frightened.

“Oh, dili (no)! He’s going to hurt me now! He knows I have some *kwarta* (money), he is coming to get more.

And if I don’t have anymore, he is for sure going to hurt me,” Michael thinks.

As the man approaches him quickly, Michael instinctively covers for impact.

MAN: Ey boy.

MICHAEL SHAKING, WHIMPERS: Stop! *Hindi* (No), *Saan* (No), *Indi* (No).

MAN: Here!

Michael looks up and the man is holding out his *kamot* (hand) offering to give him something.

Michael reaches out and accepts the contents of the man’s hand and the man walks away. As Michael brings his *lima* (hand) down to his lap, he slowly opens his *kamot* (hand). The man gave Michael half of a cigarette and a soggy pack of matches with one match.

In awe, Michael looks up and the man is gone. As Michael gets to his feet, he looks around quickly to scan the area, not a trace.

Frightened, he runs back to the *sasakyan* (car) and slams the *ganhaan* (door) shut, locking it immediately. He turns on the ignition, shifts to drive, releases the brake and starts to drive. He pulls onto Hana Highway at blazing speed.

While in his car, he opens up his *kamay* (hand) and there it is, the cigarette and a pack of matches. Out of disgust, he tosses it on the floor and wipes his *gamat* (hand) on his shirt.

“Disgusting!” he says as he reaches for the container of Lysol wipes.

Michael wipes his *kamot* (hand) once, twice, three times. Then he grabs the bottle of hand sanitizer and squirts it on his *ima* (hands). “You can never have enough sanitizer nowadays. I have to protect myself from getting sick. You don’t know what those men have so I better clean up when I get home ”

“*Nasaan* (Where) is my phone? *In-no* (where) is my phone?” Michael scrambles in the car to look for his phone. “I want to call Rosie so she can *bulig* (help) me,” he thinks to himself. “I bet she knows *nokarin* (where) to find Angel.”

Suddenly his chest starts to vibrate. “Oh heck, it’s been in my front pocket this whole time!” he scolds himself. As he dislodges his cellphone from his front pocket of his shirt, the phone slips out of his *ima* (hands) and tumbles onto the floor near the half-smoked cigarette.

“Oh shoot, forget it! I’ll just answer through my *lugan* (car) blue-tooth!” he says to himself.

MICHAEL: Hello?

SUSAN: Good morning Sir! I have an update of the things you asked me to research and the information you wanted me to look into.

MICHAEL: Good morning Susan. What are you doing in the office on a Saturday *umaga* (morning)? Last time I

checked, we only work from Monday through Friday and I gave you Saturday and Sunday as your day off.

SUSAN: Sir, you told me this is a special assignment and it’s very urgent. You gave me 72 hours as my deadline to accomplish this assignment.

MICHAEL: Really? I said that? ... Oh ... Well then, you have an update? Wow, I’m excited. Is it good news? Is it good info? I hope it’s a good one especially if you call me this early on a Saturday *buntag* (morning). Let me *dengngeg* (hear) it ... What do

see LET’S TALK PINOY p.13



# Google® Is Not Everything...

## Our Hopes for 2021

Alexis Joy Vilorio | MAUI HIGH SCHOOL

To many, the year 2020 was nothing short of a rollercoaster. From the death of a basketball legend to a deadly pandemic to a chaotic election, people all over have been faced with unusual circumstances and unfavorable outcomes. Locally, families have been devastated as jobs previously dependent on tourism were suddenly deemed unnecessary.

Amidst the misfortune, many found opportunities to bring good to the world whether it be through service to the community through the providing of personal protective equipment, groceries and even the support of local businesses. With all that 2020 has provided to us, what will come next? How is the world preparing for what is to come in 2021? Three Maui high school students reflect on their experience in 2020 and what they hope will come out of new beginnings in 2021.

**Samantha Della**, a Junior at Maui High School shares her take on the subject. When it comes to a challenge that she sees society as a whole has overcome in 2020, she views the education of her whole generation (Gen Z) as a huge achievement given

the circumstances of the pandemic. “I think that one of the biggest challenges that were overcome during 2020 was being able to educate our generation, Gen Z, through various resources including articles online, videos, social media posts and so much more,” Della says. “Before 2020, I never really took the time to understand what was happening in the world and why certain things were important. This extremely historical year has taught me that being educated is so important and that there are not only problems in your community and/or personal life but throughout the entire world as well. It’s important to find any way that we possibly can to help make a change and help educate others.” To Samantha, 2020 was a year of learning, both for herself and others like herself.

During the long quarantine we all experienced in 2020, Samantha found good in the situation and put her energy towards self-care and improvement. “From that long, long quarantine given to us from the pandemic, I was able to shine light onto a bad situation and find ways to work on my-



Samantha Della

self. Without having to worry about school, I found ways to build my self-confidence and my self-esteem. I explored how I dress and I tried new things, I exercised and overall I just became a better version of myself, which I am extremely grateful for.”

Seeing what 2020 offered, Samantha already set her eyes on how she wants the world to look in 2021. “Going forward, for 2021, I hope that during the upcoming year, we will find a stable hope to ending the spread of COVID-19. I hope that Gen Z will continue to educate themselves as well as others. I hope that the world will never have to experience another problem like this for at least a while and if they do, I hope they become better prepared for the challenges ahead.”

Personally, Samantha is hoping to take advantage of what is offered to her as she enters the last stretch of her high school career. “I hope that during 2021, going into my senior year, I continue to take opportunities.” She also took the time to acknowledge the importance of optimism and a positive mindset. “I hope everyone around me continues to look on the bright side of things and continues to push through this situation we have all been put in.” For her last remarks, she hopes for the very best for the world. “Most importantly, I hope that I can be successful and eventually have all of our lives return to normal.”

**Charlotte Wyn Cabaccang**, a Senior at Maui High School reflects on the events of 2020 and her hopes of what is to come. Taking a more personal approach to the subject, Charlotte credits 2020 for the overcoming of her fear of public speaking thanks to distance learning. “Being in a virtual environment made it easier for me to participate in group discussions and present to the class because I feel that there is a sense of wall separating me from others, which assures me that I am safe. Also, my work area is my safe space, and being able to talk to others while being in it lowers my anxiety and I feel more comfortable,” Cabaccang says.

In addition to her newfound public speaking skills, thanks to the time allotted to her in quarantine, Charlotte also shifted her focus towards mental health wellness and relaxation which ultimately benefited her. “I was able to focus on my mental health and take a breather dur-

ing summer break which gave me more motivation to do better. It also set me up for success in more difficult coursework at the beginning of the school year.”

In 2021, Charlotte is looking forward to an effective vaccine for COVID-19 and the de-escalation of the situation as a whole. “I hope that the vaccines will be widely distributed with no bad side effects in 2021 and I also hope that the number of people getting sick or losing their lives will go down.”

A Senior at Baldwin High School, **Abbygail Vilorio** also took the time to look back on 2020 and shed her hopes for 2021. In 2020, Abbygail states the hardships she faced as her

family was directly affected by the pandemic. “Personally, the biggest thing I have overcome in 2020 is COVID-19. This virus is one of the worst things I have ever faced in my life and it had taken hold of the people I loved dearest, leaving me traumatized. My whole family got it. I had it the easiest since I was asymptomatic but it was still scary knowing that I could have gotten someone sick if I was not careful.” Taking the proper precautions to keep other loved ones and the community safe, Abbygail is grateful that her family overcame the tenure of the virus. “I am proud to say that my family and I had overcome COVID-19; it was an experience that we will not forget,” Vilorio says.

Looking past her challenges, Abbygail finds peace knowing how much the acceptance and unity of the world as a whole have grown. “In the world, I believe that in 2020 everyone has overcome each other’s differences and learned of each other’s importance. Everyone has slowly learned to accept and stand along with one another, regardless of skin color, race, culture, or beliefs. All around the world, we have come together to stand up for each other and I believe it is incredible that this year has brought this out in all of us.”

For 2021, Abbygail is fixated on ending the pandemic that has taken a huge toll on her family and so many others worldwide. “The idea of 2021 is a bit scary to think about, just because I have so many hopes that might not possibly happen. COVID-19 brought so much pain and sadness upon my family and I could not imagine how awful it must be for other people



Charlotte Wyn Cabaccang



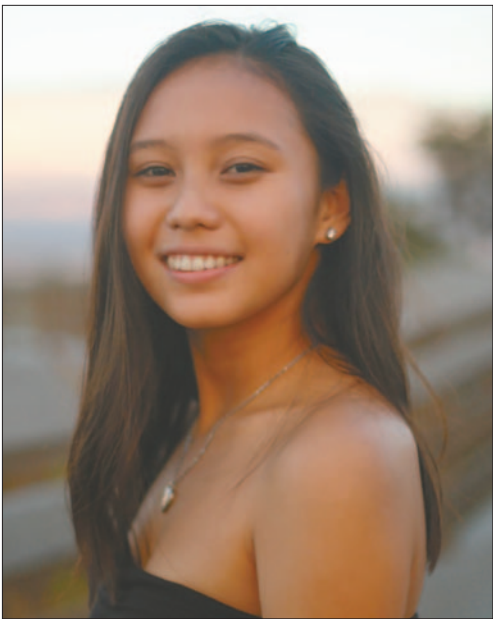
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Abbygail Vilorio

out there suffering from this virus.” She is hopeful for a time where nobody else has to live in fear of the virus ever again. “I hope that in 2021 there will be a vaccine to cure this virus and no other human being will have to suffer the pain of COVID-19. 2021 will hopefully be the year where things can turn around for the better! No more differences, no more COVID and a new normal where it is not as scary to go outside.”

Now in her final year of high school, 2021 is the year of Abbygail’s graduation and entrance into higher education. Abbygail took the time to share her hopes regarding her success in 2021. “However, my hopes for 2021 as of now, are to graduate high school, transition into college and live a happy life. High school has been stressful and honestly, I cannot

wait to get out though I am also a little scared.” Though scared for what is to come, Abbygail is ready to take on the world in 2021.

Though the outcome of 2021 is everything but certain, there is no doubt in knowing what the youth of Maui are going to be fixated on in the upcoming year. After a drawn-out year of quarantine, misfortune, masks and madness, everyone is hoping to see the light at the end of the tunnel. For the sake of the world, out of 2020 will hopefully come the reprisal brought by 2021. ✨

**Google® Is Not Everything** is a monthly column authored by high school students. The title of the column emphasizes that education is more than just googling a topic. Google® is a registered trademark. This month’s guest columnist is **Alexis Joy Vilorio**, a Senior at Maui High School. She is the founder and President of Maui High’s SaberScribes journalism club, and Vice President of the Silversword Chapter of the National Honor Society. Alexis is a part of Maui High’s air riflery team and is also a committed member of HOSA-Future Health Professionals as the Secondary Representative of the Hawai’i HOSA State Council and a HOSA state gold medalist and international finalist. Alexis hopes to one day become a Pediatric Physician. She is the daughter of Alex and Juvy Vilorio.



## Let’s Talk Pinoy!

Cont’d from p. 11

you have for me?

SUSAN: Are you on your way to the office? Where are you?

MICHAEL: Hmmm. No. I just came from Pā’ia and I had a flat tire. I am driving to the shop to have my tire fixed and then go see someone. Should I be in the office on a Saturday?

SUSAN: Well Sir, I think you have to call me when you are not driving or when you are done with all the things you have to do today. I’m afraid I don’t have any good news for you on this one.

Not a good news? Uh, oh what is it now? What is the information that Michael will *dinig* (hear) about the research? Does he want to *dungug* (hear) it or wait till Monday when he gets to the office? Should he go to the shop and have his tire fixed or should he go to the office and *malalam* (hear) the result of the research? How do you handle bad news or unpleasant news? How do you react and how do you deal and cope with it?

Let me know by visiting us on our facebook page and leave us your answer or a comment at [www.facebook.com/FilAmVoiceMaui](https://www.facebook.com/FilAmVoiceMaui).



I’m Dulce, helping you to master your Filipino Languages. Like always, let’s laugh, let’s *makinig* (listen) and *Let’s Talk Pinoy!* *Hanggang sa muli!* (Until next time!) *Ingat!* (Take care!)

✨ **Dulce Karen Butay** was graduated from Maui High School and earned her Associate in Arts degree in Liberal Arts from Maui Community College and her Bachelors of Science in Business Administration, specializing in Accounting, from the University of Hawai’i—West O’ahu. She is currently the Administrative Officer at the County of Maui, Department of Finance. Butay is a licensed Resident Producer of Life Insurance with World Financial Group and an Independent Consultant of Saladmaster. She is now part of the Travel Club of Saladmaster and won an all-expenses paid trip to Cancun, Mexico with the love of her life, Paul Manzano. Butay has traveled to Texas, the Philippines and Thailand as one of the delegates from Island Healthy Solutions, a Saladmaster dealer here on Maui.

## Faith ...

from p. 5

the bad vibes and negativity around you win over your positive beliefs.” In the end, the pandemic brought a blessing in disguise, time together as a family. “We’ve been hiking with our daughter; she loves to hike,” said Geraldine. “If it wasn’t for the pandemic, we would have probably never seen the beauty of Maui.”

Although the loss of routine and financial stability was a common experience for many during the pandemic, some experienced the loss of loved ones. “The biggest challenge for me is when the head Pastor Ramil Castillo of our church in the Philippines (who’s also a Mentor, Spiritual Father, and also one of the closest people in our family) died this last October. Although it wasn’t from COVID, it broke my heart to have him taken away from us so suddenly. The feeling of not being able to go home to the Philippines to see him because of quarantine made it hard for me and my family. He’s a big part of my life and a great influence of my spiritual life,” said Sarah Jane Larin, who identifies as a born-again Christian.

How do you find faith after losing the one you love? How do you cope and how do you move on? “Honestly, I felt that my beliefs were suddenly shaken when all of these incidents happened especially this year 2020



Sarah (center, with arms extended) and her family with their beloved Pastor Ramil Castillo who unexpectedly passed away this year.

PHOTO COURTESY SARAH LARIN

but while I was listening to one of the sermons in the Philippines, God reminded me that no matter what happens, He will never leave us nor forsake us. Maybe sometimes we cannot understand why these things are happening in the world but He reminded me that He has a purpose for everything. I’m still thankful because He proved that He’s still in control of everything because He protected us during this pandemic. Nobody got sick and got affected by COVID in my family and for me, that is one thing that I should be thankful for,” she added.

Melody Sales who attends Koinonia Pentecostal Church also experienced some struggle with her faith during her quiet moments at home while raising her newborn Brayden Sales. In November 2019, she and her husband Bryan endured the pain of losing two of their triplets and faced the difficult

see FAITH next page



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Goodbye ...

from p. 10

water at this time to keep the business open,” said Kit Zulueta Furukawa, owner of Mystery Maui, an escape room. “We have seen tourist bookings but not yet at the desired level. Our safety and cleaning procedures have heightened as we continue to develop and offer alternate products even though we can’t make long-term projections. Many in our industry have closed their doors, so it will be a true test of grit and resourcefulness.”

Events canceled

The Maui Fair—Maui’s largest community event—was canceled. The Annual Barrio Fiesta was postponed, canceled, and reappeared as a successful virtual event. The Maui Fil-Am Heritage Festival was also canceled although the Philippine Flag Raising ceremony was held but limited to ten folks in attendance.

Weddings, graduation parties, birthday parties, political fundraisers and other large celebrations were canceled. The catering businesses suffered. Binhi at Ani canceled all events and lost all revenues since March.

“It’s been a very difficult time for Binhi at Ani,” said Melen Agcolicol, who became Binhi at Ani’s president in July. “We were hoping to re-open in August but then the COVID numbers increased. Even with the Center closed, we still have bills to pay and had to resort to fundraisers such as Takeout Tuesday and our virtual Bar-



“We have seen tourist bookings but not yet at the desired level. Our safety and cleaning procedures have heightened ...,” said Kit Furukawa

PHOTO COURTESY KIT FURUKAWA

rio Fiesta to raise funds.”

Sharing the Bayanihan Spirit

Despite Binhi at Ani’s own financial issues, the Binhi at Ani Board of Directors approved the #BayanihanFood-Distribution project. “Initially we were only going to do it for a few months,” explained Agcolicol. “But the need is great and thanks to our partnerships with the County of Maui, Maui Food Bank, and our many donors and vol-

see GOODBYE back page



Melody and her son, Brayden at home. PHOTO COURTESY MELODY SALES



Melody and her church family. PHOTO COURTESY MELODY SALES

Faith ...

from p. 13

ties of adjusting to changing hospital protocols with COVID, finding a home on O’ahu during the beginning of the year and then transitioning back to their home on Maui once Brayden was cleared to be released. “When the boys passed, I had never questioned God so hard in my life. I didn’t understand and it wasn’t fair. And there was a time where I just felt so clouded and numb, there was nothing my auntie (who is my pastor at our church) could have said that would have made me feel better. I guess you could say I probably lost my faith in that short while.”

She did, however, remain open to reconnecting with her faith. “Eventually, I think seeing and realizing that Brayden continued to fight was where I knew I had to change my mindset. I grew up in the church and raised by parents that went to a Bible college and I believe it’s all I knew to do when backed up in a corner like that—like where else am I to go if physically, I can’t control the situation? So, I focus on it spiritually,” she explained. Being away from close family and friends proved to be difficult during the pandemic. With Brayden born prematurely, their home held off on welcoming family members that were excited to meet him. The time alone with him also gave her time to reflect on the past year so far. But preserving her relationship with God kept her sane. Despite the changing world, she feels reassured God never changes. “Being isolated from family and friends, from being around them every week to absolute zero contact for months, it was tough,” Melody explained. “Having phone contact with family members and close friends that have become family over many years of attending church together helped her. “It makes a big difference that we share the same beliefs because while we may not ‘talk Bible’ all the time, we remind each other to be better and we tend to find encouragement from each other. Not that my other friends don’t do the same, it’s just different with them, we connect more on a spiritual level where God is the center.”

There are days where Melody reflects on what could be if all three of her boys were home with her and Bryan. “Some days are sad and some days we laugh just thinking about how outnumbered I would be.” As Brayden continues to get stronger each day, Melody hopes the world



Melody, Brayden and Bryan Sales. PHOTO COURTESY MELODY SALES

will be able to go back to normal and allow people to see the ones they love and be together without worry or fear. For those seeking words of wisdom to get through pain and isolation during COVID, she lends this piece of advice: “Find something you believe in. It may not necessarily be God but so that you can always go back to it to keep you grounded, positive and hopeful for all things.”



Derick Sebastian, a Christian of Hope Chapel in Kihei, is a local singer and encountered difficulty with staying motivated. Always ready to spread cheer, smiles and his passion for music, his plans for the year came to a halt. “My live music engagements were all completely canceled and it was easy to get upset about the entire situation of uncertainty but I prayed about it a lot. I knew that God wanted to re-shape me and pivot in my music journey ... and so I did. This entire COVID-19 was truly a blessing in disguise.”

“The entire world including the media was instilling nothing but fear ... but the Bible says to live in faith and never lose hope. Every single day during the pandemic ... I made a commitment to win. Whatever I was doing, I fought to be productive because God doesn’t want me to just be good ... He wants me to be great,” he explained. Using his religion as a key foundation to help him stay grounded and clear minded, he journaled every single day, praying and asking for God’s guidance and allowed himself to be vulnerable and surrender to what he was experiencing. Instead of allowing himself to drown in the disappointment of not being able to perform and share his passion, he focused on his experiences to learn from them. “Life is a journey ... and we all need to embrace both the ups and downs ... because all these experiences shape our very own character which means more than anything. People won’t really remember your accomplishments, accolades, titles, etc., they’ll remember on how you

see FAITH back page

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# Kwento Kwentuhan

## One Word for 2021

New Year 2021 is only a few weeks away!  
Are you ready for it?

Liza A Pierce of “A Maui Blog”

Some of you might already be thinking of New Year’s resolutions. Some of you might be formulating goals and intentions. As for me and many others who have been practicing the choosing of ONE WORD at the start of the year, I am already thinking of my one word for 2021. In fact, just before I started writing this article, my one word for the year 2021 came to me and that word is well, continue reading and you will find out ...

### Why Have a Word for the Year?

The process of choosing a word helps you focus on the goals and actions you want to work on for the next year. It also helps you determine your priorities like whether you will concentrate on family, personal growth, career etc. Carefully selecting a word of the year helps you to gain clarity about the things you would like to create in your life and the way in which you want to live. After years of choosing a personal word of the year, I can say with complete confidence that it’s an exercise everyone should try. Let me share with you my journey with ONE



I do not have a green thumb, but one of these days I’ll have a full herb and vegetable garden. I have to be persistent in making “tending to my plants” a part of my routine.

PHOTO: LIZA PIERCE

doing. It was a great year and I accomplished a lot due to having an extra dose of courage. In 2019 I chose TRANSFORM. Transform means to make a thorough or dramatic change in the form, appearance or character of, terms of my physical body, my spiritual being, my work, my attitude and more.

My one word this year 2020 is ALIGN. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I chose to do things only if they align with my values and goals. No extras, no distractions, no drama. It is quite liberating.

Now for the year 2021, my own word is ... PERSIST! There are some projects I have started in the past years which I need to be diligent, consistent and persistent for me to accomplish the goal and finish the projects.

Choosing a word doesn’t have to be difficult at all. You may already know what you want to use while reading through this article. Maybe you need more time to think about it. Either way, I am excited for all of us. Let us enter the year 2021 with enthusiasm, hope and optimism. Let’s do this! ✨

**Liza Pierce** of A Maui Blog is an Interactive Media Strategist in Hawai’i. She started blogging in 2006 and she loves talking story online and spreading Aloha around the world. She’s been living on Maui since 1994 and considers Maui her home. A wife, a mother, a friend ... and so much more. She loves Jesus; Maui Sunsets Catcher; Crazy About Rainbow; End Alzheimer’s Advocate. Her life is full and exciting here on the island of Maui. Liza is currently the Interactive Media Strategist with Wailea Realty Corp.



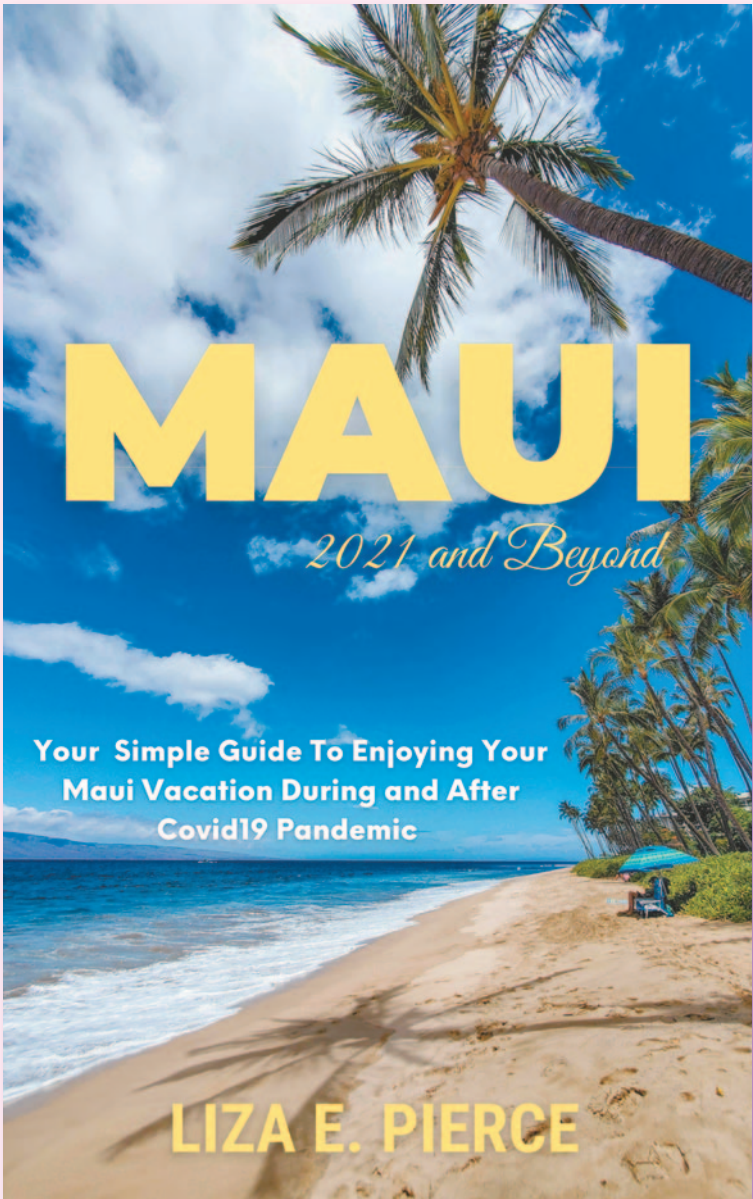
Being persistent in my daily entry, planning for this new year 2021 in my planner is certain to make a difference in my productivity.

PHOTO: LIZA PIERCE

WORD and I hope this inspires you to decide on your word for the year 2021.

In 2017 I chose LISTEN. I learned to listen well in a conversation—I listened to what other people are saying. I learned to listen to myself and get tuned to what I need and want; I learned to listen to that inner voice, that still small voice inside of me which usually is prompting of the Holy Spirit; I learned to listen to not only what people say but listen to what they don’t say. 2017 was a great year of listening.

In 2018 I chose COURAGE. It was the year I braved the wilderness. It was the year I became brave in sharing who I am. Having courage as my one word enabled me to do things I would usually avoid



The Maui guide book I am currently writing began in 2017. This is the big project where I need to remind myself to persist until it is published.

PHOTO COURTESY LIZA PIERCE



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AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THOSE DAYS, THAT THERE WENT OUT A DECREE FROM CAESAR AUGUSTUS THAT ALL THE WORLD SHOULD BE TAXED...

And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

(Luke 2: 1, 3-14 KJV)

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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# Goodbye ...

from p. 14

unteers, we decided to do it through the end of the year. Our kitchen renovation project is also ongoing and in February, we will transition to our new project #BayanihanFeedingProgram.”

## Moving Ahead— A Vaccine For All?

As we go to press, Pfizer has started rolling out a vaccine. The first vaccine was administered in Great Britain—by a Filipina nurse—to an elderly resident. The United States will soon receive its share of Pfizer’s vaccine as well as from other companies.

Maui’s share of the first round will be 16,000 doses which means that 8,000 folks will be initially vaccinated as it’s a two-part dose. In the meantime, until more vaccines become available, the public needs to continue to be vigilant.

“As we move ahead, it’s crucial that we continue to protect one another by following public health and safety guidelines. Mask wearing, physical distancing, frequent hand washing and not gathering in groups works. Let’s keep it up,” said Victorino. “We’ve made it this far. I have faith in the people of Maui County. So, I’m confident that, together, we will rebuild in 2021 and emerge Maui Nui strong.” ✨

**Alfredo G. Evangelista** is a graduate of Maui High School (1976), the University of Southern California (1980), and the University of California at Los Angeles School of Law (1983). He is a sole practitioner at Law Offices of Alfredo Evangelista, A Limited Liability Law Company, concentrating in estate planning, business start-up and consultation, nonprofit corporations, and litigation.

He has been practicing law for 37 years (since 1983) and returned home in 2010 to be with his family and to marry his high school sweetheart, the former Basilia Tumacder Idica.



Derick Sebastian reflecting before his TedX presentation about his late father Sam Ellis III and finding his purpose and passion through ukulele.

PHOTO COURTESY DERICK SEBASTIAN

# Faith ...

from p. 14

made them feel. In life, it’s not what you do, it’s how you do it.”

It is hard to imagine what happened this year—the onslaught of chaos from a global pandemic, the loss of Kobe Bryant and his daughter Gianna, the fight against racial inequality, “murder hornets” that terrorized our country for a bit, the death of “the Black Panther” Chadwick Boseman, the raging wild fires on the West coast that engulfed California to Washington state, the death of Ruth Bader Ginsburg and President Trump testing positive for COVID-19. I’m sure the year was even more difficult with our own

obstacles—unemployment, family sickness and death, and being isolated from the ones that we love. Despite the world feeling like it was turned upside down this year, it is encouraging to find stories of people throughout our community who still have faith and hope for good things to happen. ✨

**Vanessa Joy Domingo** is a graduate of Maui High School and is employed with the County of Maui - Department of Management, IT Services and Coldwell Banker as a Realtor. She hopes everyone celebrates safely during the holidays and wishes everyone a holiday season full of love and hope.

