

The Spire

LOVE NEVER FAILETH

Photograph by: Margaret Lloyd

Central Union Church and Preschool

"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!"

December 2019

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Pastor's Page

Rev. David Rivers, Senior Minister

Each December, our culture starts buzzing with excitement and anticipation. Christmas songs—both secular and sacred—intertwine to tell of the Good News of Christ's birth and the joy of the season. Christmas decorations adorn houses and stores while plans are finalized of how to celebrate Christmas each year.

Ever since I visited Bethlehem, Christmas has taken on a whole new texture. In my mind's eye I see the Church of the Nativity poised high above the Shepherd's Valley where those shepherds first heard the news. I can see the grotto (cave) where Christians have gathered since the early centuries to honor the place where God became flesh in the birth of Jesus. I picture the Chapel of the Milk Grotto, off the beaten path, where it is believed that Mary nursed Jesus as they began to flee from Herod's edict of the death of the firstborn. While nursing him, legend holds that a drop of Mary's milk fell on the stone and turned it white. Since the 300's, pilgrims have visited this grotto to pray for the ability to conceive a child of their own.

This ancient city is a place of perpetual hope and peace. The hope is found in God's answer, to humanity's cry for presence, as the baby Jesus becomes our Emmanuel—our God with us. This profound statement reminds us that God comes to us...vulnerable. God is willing to risk everything in order to be with us. Just as a newborn is the most vulnerable of all people, so too God reveals Godself as vulnerable to us and welcomes us to come and behold.



This town is also a promise of peace. God didn't come with destructive forces but with the peaceful cry of an infant. The old hymn, Silent Night, paints the world bathed in heavenly peace. For one night, we cling to this hope that peace will prevail amidst our warring madness. Sadly, it wasn't too much later that the king sought the death of this child.

Even still, we cling to the hope of peace. Behind the Chapel of the Milk Grotto is a monastery with a chapel called the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. Central to the chapel is an exquisite work of art entitled Queen of Peace (pictured). It is a unique view of Mary holding the infant Jesus depicted as the Eucharist host.

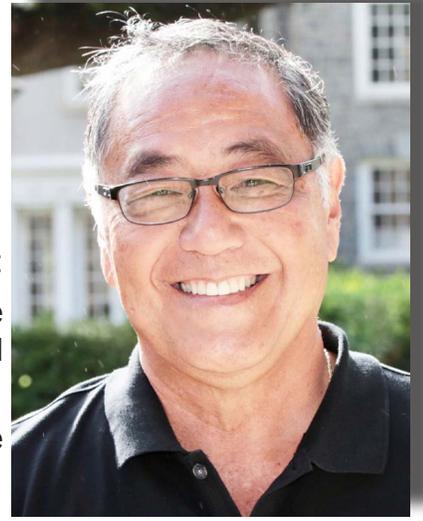
While the art is stunning, what truly inspires is a community of nuns. These sisters pray continuously for peace in our world. All hours of every day, they gather to honor God and ask once more for God's peace to dwell.

In a month that has often become much too consumeristic, I'd dare say, perhaps the reminder of the first Christmas is the gift—a child born to us, for us and with us. In that night, peace transcends all time and space and marks a promise of that which will be—a cosmic peace that falls upon us all. I hope you will join us in this season to reflect, rejoice and wonder in the story of God among us!

Council Talking Points

Tom Kiyabu, *Council Chair*

Aloha CUC Congregation,



The Council is working diligently on the following items, prior to the end of 2019:

1. Treasurer Craig McGinnis, along with the Admin & Finance Committee, are working very hard on finalizing the 2020 budget. This budget will be presented to the congregation in January 2020 for approval.

2. The CUC Vision Team, led by Chair Greg Sato, have been reaching out to the entire congregation, seeking ideas concerning the future of CUC.

3. Under Martha Balkin's leadership, the Stewardship Campaign is doing well.

It is our call to minister to our communities in need. Your financial support allows us to touch someone's life. Please give from your heart.

4. As people of faith we know that by consciously living into our mission of "Engaging and Embracing ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!", our growth will continue.

At CUC, we are very busy with church activities as we enter the Season of Advent, a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the celebration of the birth of Jesus at Christmas.

While entrenched in the world of commercialism, I would encourage you to slow down and allow time to get your heart ready to bring Jesus into your life. Let's be especially conscious of the poor and less fortunate, as we await the birth of our savior who delivers a world of hope, peace, joy and love.

Christmas, to me, is about family and friends. It's about people celebrating together, bringing the warmth of LOVE to someone who is alone.

I hope that you allow yourself a moment of peace, quietly reflecting on 2019 while preparing for a spiritual 2020.

I am always so grateful for you all, and cherish the many CUC members I meet, as well as the love, support, and care you give to me and my family.

I would like to wish you and your loved ones a Merry Christmas and a joyful, safe, and loving New Year!

Blessings to you all!

Peace be with you. Your kindness is extraordinary!



Love the Lord with All of Your Heart, Soul, Mind; AND....

By **Evie Hao**, *President, Faith Action*

In December we celebrate the birth of Christ who taught us to “**Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind; AND your neighbor as yourself.** –Matthew 22:37-39.

Twenty-three years ago, Faith Action for Community Equity was born when multiple faith communities covenanted to follow Christ’s teaching to love their neighbors as themselves.

To them, this meant being active in state and city decisions that determine who will have a decent **home**, who will find a **job with a living wage**, who will **receive a quality education**, who **will get medical care**, and who **will be safe**.

Three years ago, Central Union Church joined Faith Action for Community Equity.

This year, CUC members became immersed in the legislative process by supporting Faith Action bills that would •make truly affordable housing possible, •improve kupuna long term care, and •close the Hawaii tax loophole for corporations that own Hawaii property but are exempt from paying any state taxes. We gained knowledge, new friends, and more inner strength in the process.

In September, sixteen CUC members attended Faith Action’s Oahu-wide Affordable Housing Summit which brought together experts who play vital roles in the building of truly affordable housing. We learned of complex factors that must come together for the possibility of homes for all:

- Land: public, private, eleemosynary
- Finance: public, private, eleemosynary
- Development : for profit, non-profit

We are now getting ready for the 2020 legislative session. Housing will remain a top priority; living wage for all will be our new issue; and Faith Action youth will take the lead on environmental justice.

Come join Faith Action for Community Equity. Questions? Ask Evie Hao at evyhao@gmail.com.



Left to Right: Ken Harding, Ellafe Croft, Claire Gearen, David Yee, Naty Aczon, Rik Papa, Evie Hao, Tom Kiyabu, Dona Hanaike, Gary Hoover, Greg Sato, Rev. David Rivers, Don Clifford. Not pictured— Ruth Chang, Carolyn Kuahulu, George Hao.

Celebrating Wonder Women!

Lisa Haley, *Women's Retreat Planning Committee Chair*

Sharing laughter and hugs, song and silence, 55 women enjoyed a weekend retreat at Camp Mokuleia in early November. We thank the Women's League and Diaconate for their generous financial support, making it possible to offer scholarships!

This year's theme of CELEBRATING WONDER WOMEN! helped shape our learning times and lighter moments. We lifted up the history of 30 years of women's retreats and celebrated a number of first-timers, too. Our Pohnpeian sisters put their unique spin on the theme by teaching us to craft flowers using Wonder Woman colors!

We gained inspiration, blessings and new insight from women in the Bible, listened for God's voice in the wind and the waves, reveled in the beauty of creation, and cherished the gift of friendships new and old. We supported women in our community through our Sunday offering for the UCC Transition House & the Family Thank fund of the Women's Board of Missions.

As Marion Lyman-Mersereau began her poetic reflection on our experience:

*"We learn to discern
as we hear story after story
of Wonder Women in all their glory
those who stay as true
as the deep, singing ocean is blue..."*



Surf's Up – 2020 Stewardship Campaign Update

Brittany Hopkins, *Controller*

Thank you all for your continued financial support of Central Union Church! The generosity of our faith community keeps our mission alive and thriving! Giving through pledges and open plate is the largest revenue stream that supports the Church's annual programs and ministries.

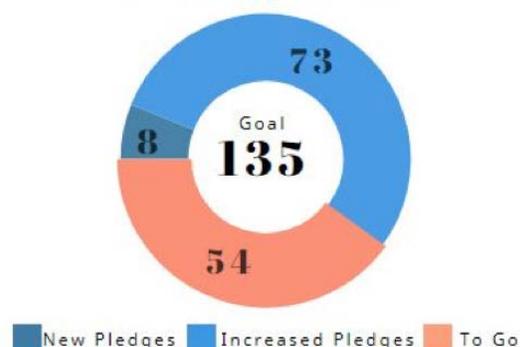
The goal of the 2020 Stewardship Campaign, "Catch the Wave", is to increase participation. Specifically, we're looking for first time surfers as well as current surfers who are ready to graduate to a new surfboard size (not sure what this means? Check out our 2020 Campaign Mailer in the pews or on our website).

With a goal of 135 new and or increased pledges, we have had 8 new surfers grab a board with us and 73 surfers graduate to a new level of generosity with CUC.

Great News! - we are more than half way to our goal and we pray that with your help we can keep the momentum going into the New Year.

If you have any questions or would like to make a pledge/donation to the Church, please contact Brittany Hopkins at Brittany-hopkins@centralunionchurch.org or 440-3017.

2020 Campaign Participation



Messiah!

The 72nd annual presentation of Handel's Messiah by the Central Union Oratorio Choir, Central Union Soloists and Chamber Ensemble under the direction of Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan is scheduled for **Sunday, December 8th, at 7:00 PM** in the Sanctuary. Please contact Margaret Lloyd at margaret-lloyd@centralunionchurch.org for any additional information. Why not invite a friend to attend with you as we offer this time-honored gift of music to the community?



Walk in the Footsteps of Jesus in 2020!

Save the Date! We are planning a trip in October of 2020 (approximate dates October 10-22) to walk in the footsteps of Jesus! We'll start in Bethlehem, his birthplace. While there, we are planning to spend a day with local families during their annual festival in which the community begins the olive picking season. We'll help pluck olives, celebrate with the local community and rejoice in the gift of God's bounty.

Then we'll head north to the Galilean region of Jesus' public ministry and visit the Mount of Beatitudes, Capernaum (Peter's hometown), take a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee and explore the countryside.

We'll then wind our way through Nazareth, the coastline and back to Jerusalem as we visit the Old City and the many historic sites including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre which houses the empty tomb! We stand upon the Mount of Olives, visit the Garden of Gethsemane, and visit the Upper Room.

Pastor David will have an informational meeting in the early part of 2020 for those interested in going on this sacred pilgrimage. With limited space, if you would like to get your name on the interest list, please email Natasha Dator at Natasha-dator@centralunionchurch.org or call at (808)440-3004.

Blue Christmas: A Service of Reflection for the Longest Night

On **Saturday, December 21st at 6:30 PM**, in the Atherton Memorial Chapel, we will gather for our annual Blue Christmas: a Service of Reflection for the Longest Night.

This service, held on the longest night of the year, recognizes that not everyone is merry at Christmastime. It may be the first Christmas without a loved one; it may be a time that has always been difficult. It may just be that you are feeling frazzled and not feeling the "Christmas spirit." The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the "blah" of life, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation - all these can make us feel very alone in the midst of the celebrating and spending. We need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern; we need to know that we are not alone. Through music, silent meditation, scripture, and healing prayer, we reach out to acknowledge sadness with comfort and quiet remembrance, to reflect on the losses we have experienced and to remember together, whatever our spiritual path, the real reason for the season: that we are not alone, and that light will come again.

All are welcome.



Youth Participate in “E.C.O.” Camp

Kristen Young, *Youth Director*

Twelve youth from Central Union Church participated in “E.C.O. 4 Youth,” a new program of the Hawai’i Conference United Church of Christ that brought youth together on Maui in October and on O’ahu in November, for a camp providing Earth Care Opportunities. A total of eleven churches were represented among the campers and volunteers at the O’ahu camp that took place on November 9-11 at Waiialua UCC.

Through helping with work around Mōhala Farms and taking part in preparing a healthy meal for all to share; hearing presentations by Dr. Mark Hixon of the University of Hawai’i and local youth Dyson Chee, who started Project O.C.E.A.N. to beat plastic pollution; hiking out to the westernmost tip of the island for the sunset and moonrise; eating with their personal dishes and utensils; creating art using repurposed materials; and enjoying fellowship with the other youth present, the hope is that the youth learned that caring for the earth, the ‘āina (that which sustains us), can and should be done in a variety of ways by all people.

The CUC youth made a list of things we can all do to be kinder to our planet, such as eating less meat, carrying reusable water bottles, recycling, using less plastic, organizing beach cleanups, using biodegradable or reusable dishes/utensils. What we eat, how we eat it, the transportation we take, the things we use and reuse, simply being aware of what’s happening in our environment, are all opportunities to care for the earth. We encourage you to think of what you can do for the environment... maybe opting for the electronic version of the Spire!

No matter how young or old we are, we all have a responsibility to care for our home and we are all capable of making a difference in our own way. We’ve seen how little things add up, so imagine all of us making just one small positive change for the earth.



Jane Rivers

Join us for Christmas Worship in 2019

Blue Christmas

A Service of Reflection for the Longest Night

6:30 PM – December 21st

Christmas Eve

5:30 PM – Family Service in Honolulu

6:00 PM – Traditional Candlelight and Holy Communion at Windward

8:00 PM – Traditional Candlelight & Holy Communion in Honolulu

10:30 PM – Traditional Candlelight & Holy Communion in Honolulu

Christmas Day

10:00 AM – One Service Only in Honolulu

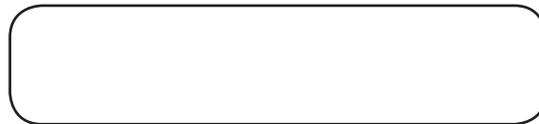
1st Sunday after Christmas

December 29th

10:00 AM – One Service Only in Honolulu

The Spire

Central Union Church
1660 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826



Thrift Shop

The Christmas Spirit has come to the Thrift Shop. Stop by and see what the elves have put out.

Wednesdays and Saturdays, 9 AM to 3 PM

Poinsettias - \$20.00 each

Name (donor) _____

Number of plants _____

- To the Glory of Christmas.
- In honor of _____
- In loving memory of _____

Please print legibly.

Please make check(s) payable to “CENTRAL UNION CHURCH” with the words, “Poinsettias” in the memo line. Please mail or bring checks to the church office, by Friday, December 20, to be listed in the Christmas Eve and Day Bulletins.