Mission of God.

Years ago in seminary, this phrase was shared often to describe the purpose of the Church. We are a community who are enacting the way of Christ by being the ambassadors of God (2 Cor. 5), sharing the message of reconciliation with the world! In the past month, we have gathered under that ‘True North Star’ that leads and guides us to the places where God is calling.

The good news for Central Union Church is discovered within our own history. Our beginnings are rooted in the mission of God as our forebearers came on mission to the seaman gathering on Oahu’s shores. Through time, the mission expanded to include the English-speaking community that was calling Honolulu home. Each successive generation followed the missio dei and discerned the mission of their day and time. Through that collective work, Central Union generated other non-profits and churches to ensure that the needs of the community were met.

Our story is inspiring and inviting. It beckons to us, this current generation, to continue the vital work of our mission and ensure that we are blessing those within our walls with inspirational worship and profound spiritual transformation so they can go to their offices and neighborhoods; to the beach and the market to share the Good News of God’s love to this world.

As we gaze upon the great needs of our time and our collective resource of people and assets, I am excited to see how we continue to follow the missio dei. We have the opportunity, and responsibility, to dream boldly, act decisively and ensure that we are addressing the great needs that mark our generation of life in Hawaii.

In the coming months, the Vision Team will be hosting many conversational sessions to gain your feedback and share their important work of discernment. The team includes Greg Sato, Carl Schlack, Dona Hanaie, Ryan Shindo, David Yee and Don Clifford. They have tirelessly met, researched and prayed for clarity on the great opportunity to impact Honolulu and create a viable way to resource the future of our church. As they gather, I hope you will make it a point to come and share in the work of God that they are helping to lead!

Mahalo Marie Hook!

After 16 years leading our Preschool, Marie Hook has entered the promised land of retirement! She faithfully served as our fearless leader in the midst of some great years, as well as trying years. As she began her long tenure, the vision of updating the preschool buildings was bubbling to the surface. It wasn’t until a devastating fire ravaged our preschool that the planning of the new facilities began in earnest. With her visionary idea, and the help of G70, Marie helped our preschool live through the journey of keiki living in temporary space and the construction of the Administration Building and Orange and Blue Cottages.

During her tenure, she helped to create the annual fundraiser, Dazzle, that helps generate needed resources to care for our keiki, the teachers and the staff. This fundraiser is attended by current CUPS families and alumni alike.

Yet Marie’s greatest gift over these past 16 years really wasn’t the buildings or fundraisers. Her greatest impact was on the families who have come through CUPS. She has impacted thousands of people with her leadership at CUPS while inspiring teachers to continue seeking their own education as they continue to bless their students. On Sunday, January 12th, Marie and her family gathered at the 11 AM service for a time of honoring and celebrating her ministry at CUC. We are thankful for her years of serving our community and wish her joyous days of family time and endeavors as the Spirit leads her!
As we enter the next decade, let’s be filled with the blessings of CUC.

Waving farewell to 2019, we left giant positive footprints...

1. Attendance: After a slower summer, we rebounded with a lot of excitement in the fall and throughout the holidays.
2. The Vision Team has done an excellent job listening to the ideas of our Congregation, Ministries, Council, and Staff.
3. We will meet our budgeted goal of a 5% endowment draw which continues the positive reduction trend during the past 4 years.

Entering 2020, we are ready for an exciting and successful year.

1. In 2020, we will fill our staff vacancies. At the Preschool, Veronique Braithwaite is serving as our Interim Director. She is doing a wonderful job filling the shoes of Marie Hook, who concluded her ministry last month. We are actively seeking a replacement for our Controller position after Brittany Hopkins accepted a Controller Assistance position at Hawaii Pacific University.
2. The Vision Team continues to conduct listening sessions while working diligently to share their plans during the Annual Meeting to be held in May. Please join them at one of the talk story sessions!
3. We are partnering with Horizons Stewardship who will train and offer strategy and support for our upcoming Stewardship Drive, Legacy Giving and Capital Campaign needs.
4. We are working to strengthen the ministries to families. Being an inviting congregation is key to our health. Please invite a family member and friends to our services. You ALL will make a difference for our future.
5. In 2020, our target is a black budget in which we live within the 4% endowment withdraw. Together, through increased revenues and controlling our costs, I am positive that we will break the barrier.

Our mission is clear—to embrace and impact the needs of our people and community, through our faith and love to all. My deepest appreciation extends out to the many volunteers, Congregation, Council, and Ministries and Staff dedicaing their time, sharing their spiritual gifts, protecting our legacy while continuing to stay on the course of God’s plan.

Aloha and Happy New Year to ALL.

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**Lenten 5-week Series**

Lent is a season of reflection, remorse and repentance, as we prepare for the new life celebrated on Easter Sunday! The Lenten season grants us a time to deal with our pain and past so we can create an open space for love, healing and forgiveness.

For 5 weeks, we’ll be engaged, through conversation, prayer, reflection and video, in studying, "Marching From Pain to Possibility." We will journey through the wilderness of woundedness to discover that, in the desert, God does the work of restoration and healing only when we are ready for that work to be done. Each week, practices will be suggested to help us examine both our wounds and the wounds of others, so the Spirit might bring healing and peace. The desert is a tough place to live but it promises us to reveal who we truly are. Join Pastor David starting on **March 5th at noon in the Rewick Board Room** as we seek God’s healing in this season of Lent. Please feel free to bring your lunch!
Women’s League To Feature Children’s Ministry in February

By Evie Hao, Women’s League Program Chair

Everyone is invited to take a close look at CUC’s Children’s Ministry which is devoted to the spiritual formation of our keiki—preschool to grade 5—on Saturday, February 29, 10:00 AM to 11:30 AM in Women’s Building. Potluck luncheon to follow.

At this Women’s League winter general membership meeting, Children’s Ministry Director Cayanna Herrera and Minister of Spiritual Formation Rev. Brandon Duran will present “Godly Play,” a children’s Christian spiritual formation curriculum. This curriculum is an interactive, relational, and tactile way of learning about our Biblical stories and Christian practices. A “Godly Play” teacher trainer will demonstrate a lesson, with children participating.

Parents, grandparents, and CUC members are invited to attend to gain knowledge of this curriculum so that we can develop a churchwide understanding and support for “Godly Play.” The hope is to start using this curriculum by next year, after acquiring curricular/instructional materials and training teachers.

Rev. Duran says, “I am looking forward to seeing how the spirit moves through this collaborative endeavor. God continues to bless this church and it’s a gift to see the many ways grace unfolds here.”

Women’s League Flower Committee Beautifies Our Worship Spaces

In December, the beauty of Christmas filled our Sanctuary, Atherton Chapel, and Parish Hall because of volunteers on the Flower Committee of the Women’s League, our custodial staff, and donors of over 125 poinsettia plants.

Dona Hanaike, volunteer chair of the Flower Committee (which also takes care of plants and flower arrangements every Sunday) said, “We had a lot of help from the flower committee and others in getting the 125+ poinsettias and other advent decorations up for the holidays. Our church staff does a great job in getting up the greens, wreaths and trees each year—a huge task. Joyce George decorates the Parish Hall Christmas tree every year. Since I work and can’t be on the campus, Ruth Stepulis makes sure that information is flowing between administration and committee.”

We invite anyone (men, too!) to join the Flower Committee. We will train and assist. Contact Evie Hao at evyhao@gmail.com.

(From left to right): Jody Libed, Lee Champion, Dona Hanaike, Jane Nagel, Jean Yokoyama, Charlotte Vick, Bonnie Sue Ajifu, Jodee Farm. Missing from picture: Gail Atwater, James Tanahashi, Faith Sato, Bonnie Andrew.
Meet the New Thrift Shop Coordinator!
Rev. Brandon Durán, Minister of Spiritual Formation

Good News! We are thrilled to announce a new Thrift Shop Ministry Coordinator. Elizabeth Wooldridge started her new position on January 6th. Ms. Wooldridge has been a volunteer at the Central Union Thrift Shop in the past and comes with a wealth of experience and great ideas for the future. Elizabeth’s enthusiasm, authenticity, and warmth won over the interview and hiring team composed of Maura Yee, Susan Hirano, Sandy Brown, Carolyn Winston, and Brandon Duran.

As a way of introducing Elizabeth to you we asked her to share a bit about herself and her love for the Central Union Thrift Shop. Here is her response:

“My father, mother, and older sister lived in Wahiawa, Hawai’i in the 1950’s. My father served here during the Korean conflict. I was born in Leominster, MA after my family moved back there to be with my mother’s family. My family retained a lot of friendships from their time on the island during the subsequent years.

I have raised 3 beautiful children and they had the unique experience of being present during my college experience in the 1990’s. Often, we would do homework together on the campus of Mt. Holyoke College in South Hadley, MA. I now have 4 grandchildren, all boys, all under 8 years old.

In my life, Thrift Shops have always been an integral part of my survival. When I was young, my mom opened a Thrift Shop in our hometown and it was a meeting place as well as a source of income for our family. Later, I would use Thrift Shops to sustain myself and my kids. Later still in life, when I was working as an Outreach Coordinator for homeless in Western, MA, I would use Thrift Shop assistance to provide needed goods for my clients.

My dreams for the Central Union Thrift Shop includes recruiting more volunteers to contribute to our already diverse volunteer population. I would like to invite individuals of all ages, abilities, cultures, and perspectives. I’d like to appeal to recruit volunteers from the student body at the University of Hawai’i who are in need of workplace experience and learning.

I want our store to continue to reflect all of the ideas and acquired expertise of all the wonderful, hardworking volunteers we have currently. I hope that veteran volunteers and new friends of the store can work together as a team towards providing the best possible recycling, upcycling, and repurposing experience.

My biggest goal in the future will be to proceed in all ways in a positive, loving way and to continue in the mission to foster and embrace goodwill, companionship, and friendship in our store and to the entire community.”

Please join the Central Union Church staff, the members of the Women’s League, and the Thrift Shop volunteers in welcoming and supporting Elizabeth Wooldridge, the new Thrift Shop Ministry Coordinator.

Thrift Shop Hours:
Wednesday and Saturday
9 AM to 3 PM
Caring for One Another

Alice Taum, Director of Congregational Care

As the new year launches and many of us ponder the year ahead, I was asked by our CUC Council Chair, Tom Kiyabu, to share with you an inspirational story of one of our members who serves others every day. Our hope is that you will look towards the new year with an open heart for God to lead you in 2020, to share your own gifts with others.

Glenn Uejio faithfully attends CUCs 7am worship service alongside his bride, Connie. In Glenn’s humble words, he is the “retired rubbah slippah salesman,” “retired CUC yardman,” and active “harp-mover,” while for countless Veterans, he is much, much more.

After retiring as a successful Hawai’i businessman, Glenn knew that he would continue supporting his wife Connie and her many musical commitments across the island, that they would travel to the mainland to see their children and grandchildren, and that they would visit Connie’s relatives on the East Coast.

As a Veteran himself, Glenn’s initial post-retirement plan was to volunteer at Kaneohe Marine Base Hawai’i as a Navy-Marine Relief Society volunteer supporting Marines returning from the Middle East. After learning more about the role he would play, Glenn asked for time to think about it. Driving back over the Pali, he stopped to say hello to the staff at the nursing home where his parents resided years before. While unsure looking back on what prompted his question, Glenn asked the Administrator “Do you have any volunteers?” Her response was, “No.” As they say, “the rest is history!”

Glenn’s volunteering wasn’t a gradual exploration, but rather jumping in with both feet, into the deep end, with his first assignment including three men in hospice. Within a couple of days, one of the men passed, followed shortly thereafter by the second. The third man is why Glenn continues to do what he does, in his words, “this man changed my life.” For nearly five months, Glenn visited and helped this WW2 Veteran who served under General McArthur while stationed in Japan. This was the beginning of Glenn’s ministry in caring for our Veterans. In Glenn’s words, within months of retirement, “God was speaking to me, knocking on my door.”

Since then, Glenn has been a dedicated and faithful volunteer at the Community Living Center (CLC) located outside of Tripler Medical Center where he cares for those who took an oath to care for the rest of us, and who now need to be cared for. Over the past six years Glenn has served hundreds of service men with his love, kinship, and care.

Many folks declare “New Year’s” resolutions, promises to ourselves for new opportunities. Perhaps you will consider Glenn’s story as a testament that God has a path for each and every one of us, if we listen! Thank you for all that you do, Glenn!

Walk in Jesus' Footsteps in 2020 Trip!

Have you ever wondered where Jesus walked?

From October 18-27, 2020, I will be leading another group of pilgrims, seeking spiritual nourishment and faith development, to walk in the footsteps of Jesus! We will start at the place of his birth, Bethlehem, where we will join with local farmers for a day, during their olive harvesting season, to learn about an ancient cultural practice still alive today.

We’ll then head north up the Jordan Valley, stopping for a time of baptism in the Jordan River, before ending up in the Galilean region where Jesus did much of his teaching and healing. We’ll visit the Mount of Beatitudes where Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount; take a sail on the Sea of Galilee; visit the home of Peter among many other significant places. Then we’ll visit Nazareth, Jesus’ hometown, before heading down the coast of the Mediterranean as we ascend to Jerusalem. For the final part of our trip, we’ll explore the ancient places where Jesus prayed, taught, suffered, died and arose.

An informational session will be held on February 16th at 10 AM in Atherton Memorial Chapel. We will have the specific information regarding costs, itinerary and a slide show of all the historical places we will visit. Please join me as we dream of walking in the footsteps of Jesus!
Our Children and Safety

Cayanna Herrera, 
*Children’s Ministry Director*

I glanced up from my task of clearing the chancel to catch a glimpse of my husband hurriedly walking down the center isle of the church toward the back door. I could tell from his sideways glances that he was looking for someone and I realized our daughter was not beside him. My heart skipped a beat and I frantically searched the dwindling crowd for her bobbing curls. Just then, I spotted her climbing the steps of the chancel to join me and saw the relief I felt mirrored in my husband’s face. Is there anything more terrifying for a parent than the inability, even for a moment, to spot their child in a crowd?

The safety of our children is our highest priority, as parents and as a faith community. It is a sacred trust to care for children and one we take very seriously at Central Union Church. Even as we Engage and Embrace all as we seek to Embody Christ, we also must continually be aware of the security needs of our most vulnerable members.

As part of our commitment to ensuring the safety of our children, we have invested in a new sign-in system for our Children’s Ministry. You may have spotted the new carts and computers as you enter the Sanctuary, Atherton Memorial Chapel, or Parish Hall. This system allows Sunday school teachers and staff to know exactly which children have checked in for each Sunday school class in real time. It also enables teachers to more easily be aware of any special needs a child may have such as health concerns or allergies. It will enable teachers to feel more confident releasing children at pick up time, with enhanced security measures that further reduce the risk of releasing a child to any unauthorized person. KidCheck increases security at special events such as Kid’s Night Out, where we may be less familiar with some of the children in attendance and provides additional training resources for staff and volunteers regarding child safety issues.

I am excited for this new chapter in Children’s Ministry. I am relieved to have had the opportunity to update our safety procedures with a more modern tool in our toolbox. I pray each family that enters this sacred space will find a safe place to grow and I believe this tool will help. For more information, or for parents, to create your account go to: [go.kidcheck.com](http://go.kidcheck.com).

Congregational Care

Alice Taum, *Director of Congregational Care*

**Christmas Day Potluck, A Huge Success!**

Thank you to Council Chair Tom Kiyabu, Secretary Val Tanaka along with her trooper-of-a-husband, Blake, and Karl Hedberg for jumping on board to the idea of a Christmas Day potluck only one week before Christmas, with joyful enthusiasm! What we anticipated would be a gathering of 30-35 people, turned out to be a celebration and fellowship among over 90 attendees. What a testament to a need and opportunity on Christmas Day! Our team of volunteers could not help but think about Jesus’ miracle of the five loaves and two fishes as there was plenty of food for all. Thank you to everyone who donated food and participated and made Christmas morning a joyful gathering!

**Sincere Mahalo**

In preparation for their move from Hawai‘i to the mainland, CUC members Haruko and Mike Watabe generously donated many items to our floral committee, including, three of Haruko’s treasured, gorgeous Ikebana vases (*pictured*). It was their gift to the congregation for all of the love and support they experienced during their time with us at CUC. The vases are currently displayed in the administration building and will be used by members of our talented floral committee throughout the years to come, to be enjoyed by all! Arigato gozaimasu, Haruko and Mike!
The Spire

Central Union Church
1660 South Beretania Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

Bless Our Keiki

Rev. Brandon Durán, Minister of Spiritual Formation

The other day my daughter received a birthday card in the mail. The card read, "I hope it's your best birthday ever! We are praying for you today and we pray that God will bless you as you grow! With aloha, Mrs. Herrera and all your friends at Central Union Church"

My daughter melted with joy. And I know she isn’t the only one. Our Children’s Ministry Director, Mrs. Herrera, sends birthday cards to all the children in our church whose birthdays we know.

Each week the Sunday school teachers at Central Union Church teach the children of our church about stories from the Bible and lessons from scripture. They do activities and crafts that reinforce the lesson plans and help children interact with the stories. Yet, this is not all they teach. Equally as important as the Biblical stories are the Biblical values. The teachers (like my kids teachers Ms. Andrea, Ms. Nicole, and Ms. Hermeleen) model patience, warmth, and aloha. I am so grateful for their work, week in and week out, as they help reinforce loving truths that we, as parents, work to instill at home.

Currently, the Children’s Ministry could use your help with their good work. We need volunteers who would be willing to help care for and bless children in the Pre/K and 1st-2nd-grade classes during the 11:00 AM worship service. We also need caring adults for the 3rd-5th-grade during the 9:00 AM worship service. Mrs. Herrera is great at working with the volunteers schedules while also keeping the needs of the keiki in mind. We are also in need of loving adults willing to be called upon as substitute teachers for when the unexpected need arises. Mrs. Herrera offers training and support for our volunteers.

You don’t have to be a Bible whiz to be a Sunday school teacher. You simply need to have a bit of the open heart of Jesus who beckoned the little children to come. If you have questions about the Children’s Ministry program or if you are interested in serving the church by blessing our keiki then please contact Cayanna Herrera at (808) 440-3006 or at Cayanna-Herrera@centralunionchurch.org