

Central Union Church and Preschool
“We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!”

The Spire

Photograph by: Kristen Young

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Pastor's Page

Rev. David Rivers, *Senior Minister*

There is this moment in the story of Israel that I have always found fascinating. It is a perennial issue revealed most notably in their story of fleeing their past, heading toward their future. They are in the midst of that in-between space of place. The previous place was one they knew wasn't good nor healthy. It was a place they needed to escape and cried to their God for deliverance.

The other place was somewhere up there, beyond the horizon of their limited sight. It was to be a good place—a Promised Land. But this in-between space? The desert? That is the place of great uncertainty and disquiet.

It is in that in-between space that the people had a choice. They could choose to bolster their collective faith and keep marching on or they could start glorifying their past and seeing that 'back there' was better than it was. We have a way of making rosy the past when our memory of it seems like it was much easier then (life is never easy...we just learn to adapt and grow through the unease!)

The defining moment in the desert is the report of the twelve spies, who scope out the Promised Land. They have a choice as a congregational people—which report will they trust? Will the depiction from the ten, of the challenges ahead, put them in a panic? Or will the report of the two spies, whose immense faith of what God would do, bolster their faith?

Perhaps you know this story...they choose fear over faith. Faith stands in the face of giants and dares them to challenge our God. Faith bolsters us to take steps beyond our comfort. Faith implores us to trust the unknown future to our known God!

Undoubtedly, we are all living in such a time as that. We see the unrest in our country, and world, growing. We hear of the 'Good Ole Days' which may have been, but most likely wasn't, as good as our memory would make us believe. And as a society, we have a choice to make—do we go the way of fear and striving for "good ole days" or do we step in faith toward a more perfect union? Undoubtedly, November will be an act of our democracy to determine that future.

Yet you, as a community of faith, are in a place to do the same. As you gather in the year ahead, many conversations will emerge about who CUC becomes in a post-COVID-19 world. Will you run back to a time gone by to try to recreate that experience or lean into the call of the Spirit to follow? Will you rise as one to do the important work of mission and ministry or expect a few to do the work of the many? Will you have the needed conversations that will ensure future generations inherit the gift we have received from those that preceded us?

My last days as your Senior Minister are numbered. I won't be a part of this journey, but I know Pastor Brandon will be a great guide! For me, my resignation is my leap of faith towards health and recovery from burning out. I'm excited, scared, sad, encouraged, curious, fearful, at peace...the rollercoaster of a leap of faith. My decision was not quick. I prayerfully discerned my future—my health, my relationships and my call. This is the work of the people of God. It isn't easy...but it is vital. God is calling us toward our future.

I trust the Spirit is stirring. There will be prophets that will speak truth—don't crucify them...listen to them! There will be leaps of faith that may stretch you, and the church...leap boldly! And in the end, God will be glorified, lives will be impacted, and the Good News will be lived.

Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

We live in such rapidly changing times! We as a Council are extraordinarily grateful to you, Central Union Church, as we conducted our first Annual Meeting through an online format. Participation was high and demonstrates your deep commitment to the work of your church. It stretched us to think creatively as to how we could conduct business in a physically constrained world. I think it is a good metaphor for how we are moving into the future. Things may not be the same as they were before, but we will stretch and bend to continue to embody the essence of Central Union Church, although our form may be a little different. That essence has always been our belief in “Love Never Faileth” and we are grateful for the grace, patience and love that you show as we navigate this new reality. We are honored by the trust and confidence you have placed in us to be the representative body that carries out the work of the church in the coming year.



Some notes from our last Council Meeting:

- The reopening of the campus will occur in a phased format that adheres to federal, state and city guidelines. We are working with information gleaned from our conference and other bodies to ensure that we are maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our congregation and staff. This is true for all the various aspects of our church life noted below. An online presence will continue both in worship, bible study and other small group gatherings that occur weekly.
- Central Union Preschool is planning on reopening for a summer program with a limited enrollment. A professional sanitation defogging system has been engaged to sanitize spaces. Refunds have been provided to families for services missed during the spring semester.
- Adult Day Care will be reopening on June 1 with a limited enrollment. Safety regulations impact the number of people that can participate in a given space. Arcadia manages the program and is hoping to have up to 30 in attendance, but this will be significantly fewer than the 60-70 participants for whom the Center normally provides service.
- Pastor David Rivers has submitted his resignation and his final day in the pulpit will be July 5. The Council voted to offer Rev. Brandon Duran the position of Acting Senior Minister effective July 6. We are grateful for Pastor Brandon's leadership during this time of transition. A ministerial search can be a lengthy and time-consuming process and we are grateful that CUC will have sustained leadership in place during this time.

We are extraordinarily grateful for the six years that Rev. David Rivers has served our church. Among his many accomplishments during this time, he helped us develop our mission statement and more importantly helped guide and challenge us to live into that truth: We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ. Being a people who seek to Embody Christ is a high calling. But during this time of great unrest and uncertainty, to be a people who act in ways of peace, truth and love is what we all need.

Drive-In Vespers

Rev. Mary Herbig, *Minister of Congregational Care*

On May 22, our Central Union family gathered for a special drive-in Vespers service on the great lawn. Around 70 people came together in their cars for prayer, worship, and song. We learned the inspiring stories behind some of the great hymns of our faith, like Amazing Grace, How Great Thou Art, It Is Well with My Soul, and more. Many of these hymns were written during times of great turmoil and we found that they have much to say to us in this time of uncertainty. After a time of reflection, our beautiful carillon rung each hymn and we sang along. What a blessing it was to worship together in person and share the gift of song with our neighborhood!



Welcome to our Summer Intern!

This summer, we are excited to welcome Cassie Chee to our Central Union family! Cassie is a student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary near Chicago, Illinois and will be interning with us beginning on June 8. We are so grateful to the seminary for fully funding Cassie's internship and we are excited to both bless her and learn from her for the next 11 weeks. You may see her participating in worship, leading classes, and helping to write our devotionals (among other things), so please be sure to give her a warm welcome!



Cassie's Bio:

Cassie is currently a Masters of Divinity student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. She was raised in Kirkland, Washington and considers Oahu another home as she makes yearly visits with her Dad's side of the family. Cassie feels called to support and co-create with those who are most vulnerable in her communities. She is excited to be with Central Union this summer and looks forward to coming alongside the work God is already doing within and through the church.

LOVE NEVER FAILETH