



The Spire

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

August 2020
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Pastor's Page

Rev. Brandon Durán, *Acting Senior Minister*

Centuries ago Andrei Rublev painted one of my favorite depictions of God. His work, known as The Trinity, focuses on three figures around a table with a chalice in the center. Their bodies are positioned as if in conversation; leaning in to listen and engaged with one another. The theological

idea of the trinity is a paradox. Attempts to talk about a unified, singular God expressed as three distinct persons has led many theologians to condemnation. My love for this Christian conundrum comes from its emphasis on relationship. As Andrei Rublev so masterfully captured there is an eternal conversation taking place within the very heart of God. This truth is more than a theological principle, it is a lived reality. It is often with others that we experience the presence of God. Whether we are serving others, enjoying friendships, or talking around the table, it is often within relationship that we grow in our faith and in our knowledge of God.

Inspired by this truth, the leadership of Central Union Church closed the "What's next?" sermon series with a dialogue sermon. Council Chair Martha Balkin, Council Vice-Chair Carl Schlack, the Rev. Mary Herbig, and I talked about what scriptures would guide us on the road ahead (if you missed it then I highly recommend checking out the recording on the church website under "sermons").

Martha shared her appreciation the promise that God has made everything beautiful in its time and that we are encouraged to see what beauty God is creating in this time.

"God has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end." - Ecclesiastes 3:11

Carl finds a guiding light in the wisdom to trust in the Lord. During this time of uncertainty, the temptation may be to rely solely on our own limited experience and understanding. The scripture ensures us that if we focus on God, we will find safe footing.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." – Proverbs 3:5-6

Pastor Mary finds strength in the promise that even in difficult times the love of God protects and delivers us. The darkness of difficult times is not the end of the story. Let us wait and watch for the dawn.

"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I will hope in him.'" – Lamentations 3:22-24

What verse guides your heart during this time? The Holy Spirit sings through scripture. What song resonates with your soul? Share it with someone; share it with your Council; share it with a friend; share with me the promise of God that gives you hope. Mine is found in the book of Philippians.

Writing from a prison cell in Rome and likely waiting for his execution, the Apostle Paul writes the most joyful letter of the New Testament. Life was not easy for Christ followers in Philippi but Paul saw more than the present difficulties that he and they faced. His epistle to the church in the Greek city of Philippi is filled with expressions of love and appreciation. Paul begins his letter proclaiming:

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ." – Philippians 1:3-6

This sight beyond sight guides my heart during this sensitive time. I want my heart to beat with the rhythm of this remembrance. I want each breath to be a prayer of thanks for you and for our shared labor in living the good news of God's unfailing love. I want each of us, our whole church to see beyond the news reports and phone alerts so that we would catch a glimpse of the larger story. We worship the God who has already overcome despair and death. These precarious and challenging times will be transformed into a tapestry of redemption and glory. The Holy One who began a good work with Central Union Church over 130 years ago is not done. The Blessed One who birthed beauty within you is not finished yet. Thank God that there is still yet more light and truth to break forth from Central Union Church. Thank God that there is yet more faith, hope, and love to be revealed through you.

Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

Isaiah 40:31 But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

“Remember, it’s a marathon, not a sprint.” I hear this phrase a lot. But I have to admit, I have grown weary of the lockdown. I miss not being able to worship in person, participate in Learning Trees, fellowship during Aloha Lanai and sing! I am sure I am not alone.



So, these words from Isaiah, encouraging me to “hope in the Lord” resonate particularly deeply for me during this time. As a Council, we are charged with seeing Central Union continue to be the church, despite the challenges of Covid, to continue to minister to each other and to our community. We are likewise called to ensure that our church survives and thrives into the future. The work of the Council this month has been geared towards these two goals during this transformative time in the life of our church. Here are some notes:

- Plans to reopen our campuses have been developed and while the timeline is constantly being revised given changing trends in the Covid caseload, procedures have been put in place. Our online presence has been a lifeline during this time and an ad-hoc Electronic Delivery group has begun working on suggestions to improve our current capabilities, as well as ideas for future growth. Bruce Luxton and Nathan Wong are serving as Reopening Liaisons. Contact them at reopen@centralunionchurch.org.
- Central Union Preschool has completed two-thirds of its summer session and all has been going well. Parents have been supportive and understanding of the necessary changes and summer staff are managing and adapting to these new protocols with positivity. The Preschool office team has been communicating directly with inquiries about Fall semester, to provide information and assurance for health and safety. CUPS website has been updated to include a “Health & Safety” tab to provide families more detailed and specific information.
- Our Adult Day Care program is operating again to serve our kupuna and their families, but mandatory social distancing requirements are allowing us to serve only about 50% of the kupuna served pre-Covid. To serve more kupuna, efforts are being made to maximize the existing space by changing out round tables for more space efficient square or rectangular tables and by reconfiguring or removing other furniture and equipment in the existing space. Also, we are exploring whether any other spaces at Central Union would be feasible for use by Adult Day Care. Due to the temporary closure of the Adult Day Care program and the subsequent mandatory social distancing requirements upon re opening, the program is currently operating at a deficit. Discussions are underway with Arcadia to determine how we might move forward and continue to provide this important service given existing fiscal constraints.
- Central Union Windward has been meeting with members and friends pre- and post-Covid, discussing what is important for a church community. Representatives of Council will be meeting with CUW to continue this dialogue. We are hoping to gain a better understanding of expectations and clarity around operations and communications.
- With Pastor David’s send off on July 5, Council has now turned its attention to managing the transition. Names of congregation members that are interested in serving on an Interim and Senior Search Committee are being collected and will be assembled by Council to reflect the diversity of our church.
- Initiatives that were underway prior to the Covid shutdown in March are being resumed. The Vision team has begun to meet again, and Nominations and Governance is looking at revisions to our bylaws. These are discussions that will be engaging the congregation and that we will be bringing to a congregational meeting and vote in the future.
- We continue to try to manage the financial impact of Covid. Many of our funding streams have been severely contracted by the shutdown and we are looking at how best to address current, mid term and long term operations.

We find our strength in the belief that God is with us during this time of upheaval. We find our encouragement in the love, support, prayers and acts of kindness and generosity that pour out of you, the members of our CUC ohana. May God continue to pour his blessings on us during this unknown and unprecedented time and may He guide us as we forge a new path forward for our church.

Central Union Church Women's Retreat Alert!

During this year of "Changed Plans," your Retreat committee has gotten creative!

Though our beloved venue will not be Camp Mokuleia this November, as earlier planned, we are busy working on ideas for an Online experience to help us enjoy the same bonding love and inspiration we have felt in years past.



Stay tuned, because we will be sure to:

Let you know the date and time;

Mail last year's "letter-to-self";

and reveal our "special delivery" retreat 2020, just when we needed it the most!

School Supplies for Students

For many years, the CUC Youth Ministry has collected and donated school supplies to the students of Kuhio Elementary School. Though there continues to be many uncertainties about what school will be like through the ongoing pandemic, we hope that our continued support for students will be certain! We invite you to join the Youth Ministry in blessing local students by making a monetary donation of any amount that will be used to purchase supplies for students in this new school year.

TWO WAYS TO DONATE:

(To limit physical contact, we will only collect monetary donations.)

1. Write a check to "Central Union Church" with "Kuhio School Supplies" in the memo line. Mail/deliver it to the church "Attn: Accounting" (1660 South Beretania Street; Honolulu, HI 96826).
2. Donate online through our website GIVE NOW page. Select "Youth Ministry" as the Donation Cause.

Back-pack Blessing and Drive-In Vespers

Families with keiki or youth are invited to a drive-through backpack blessing in front of the sanctuary on Sunday, August 23rd at 5:30pm. Right afterwards, join your Central Union Church community in-person to continue our Summer Vespers Series: drive-in worship on the 4th Sundays of the month. Come worship with us (from the safety of your car) for this special worship service on Sunday, August 23rd at 6:00pm. If you are not coming to church in a car there will also be a space to sit (socially distancing) on the lawn. We will start contact tracing in hopes of keeping our community safe. This will just mean we will be recording the names of who attends each service. We look forward to coming together to worship safely that Sunday evening!

Congregational Care

Alice Taum, *Director of Congregation Care*

Dear fellow faithful members of Central Union Church,
We deeply miss seeing you all in person, while I am grateful for each of you whom we have been able to connect with over the phone these past months, as we await safely gathering together again on campus in the future.

Recently I have had the opportunity to speak with some of you about your ideas and new ways for Central Union Church moving forward with our Care System. I would like to extend an invitation to anyone who may be interested in brainstorming together to prayerfully consider being part of our Care Team. With all that has changed over these past four and a half months, we will need to come up with new and creative ways to expand our care outreach for both church and community members, insuring that all care needs are met. Please contact me by phone, or e-mail if you feel called to chime in on expanding CUCs Care Ministry.

I would also like to ask each of you as members of our Congregation to please join me in praying for our System of Care, for our members who have kept our church alive for 132 years, and ultimately, for our church, as we navigate its future direction.

Grace and blessings,

Alice

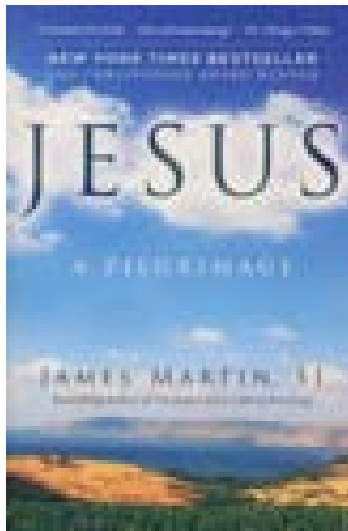
Resuming Small Group Meetings

Good news! We will be resuming our two, pre-Covid19, small-group meetings!



Caregiver Support Group

Our first Caregiver Support Group meeting will resume on Tuesday, August 4th, from noon-2pm. We invite anyone who is interested to reach out for more information.*



Book Group – Jesus: A Pilgrimage

Encounter our Lord anew as you embark on a journey to the Holy Land with Father James Martin as he shares his personal stories, anecdotes from saints, and accounts of his travels to Israel. The Book Group will pick up with Chapter 11, Capernaum, “They removed the roof above him.” While we are halfway through the book, we invite anyone who is interested in joining, to participate!*

*If you are interested in joining either of the above groups, Caregiver Support, or Book Group, or you are interested in being part of our planning Care Team, please contact Alice Taum at 440-3007 or e-mail, alice-taum@centralunionchurch.org.

PLEASE NOTE: None of the above groups can meet on campus at this time.

Pursuing Racial Justice

Cassie Chee, *Pastoral Intern*

This class is for anyone who wants to learn more about racism and pursuing justice in their own life and community. If you find yourself asking any of these questions: what does racism look like here in Hawaii? What does the Bible say about racism? How is God asking us to live in loving and just relationship with one another? Then we welcome you in this class!

This class will be facilitated our pastoral intern, Cassie Chee, and will meet for three Thursdays in a row: August 6th, 13th, and 20th at 6pm on Zoom. In each session we will build upon material from the previous. Participants are highly encouraged to attend all three sessions in order to cultivate trust and accountability in the group. If you are interested in attending, please contact Cassie Chee at cassie-chee@centralunionchurch.org.



Remembering Our Saints



Richard Braley passed away, surrounded by loved ones, on March 24, 2020. He is survived by his wife, Leigh Ann, their children, Andrew and Rebecca Braley; and sons Michael and Matthew Braley. In 1986 Richard became a member of Central Union Church, and in 2000 joined the staff as the Graphic Design and Production Manager until his retirement in 2012. Following his retirement Richard and Leigh Ann relocated to Indiana to be closer to family. Please keep the Braley family in your prayers.

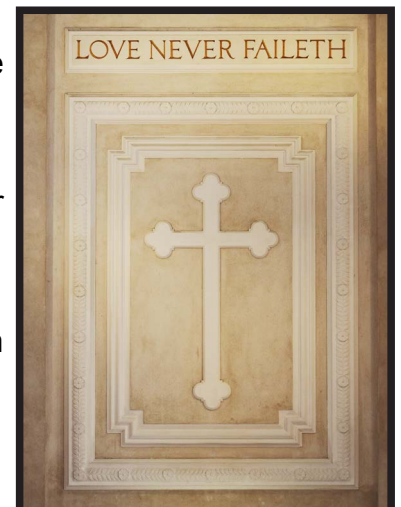
Don Ulbricht passed away peacefully at home, in Lindstrom, Minnesota on Friday, July 24th. Please keep Donna and the Ulbricht family in your prayers.

Richard I Morrill passed away on June 18, 2020. Please keep the Morrill family in your prayers.

Laura McIntyre passed away on July 14, 2020. Please keep the McIntyre family in your prayers.

Irene Lai passed away on July 1, 2020. Please keep the Lai family in your prayers.

Helen Dalton passed away on June 25, 2020. Please keep the Dalton family in your prayers.



LOVE NEVER FAILETH