



The Spire

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

May 2021
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Pastor's Page

Rev. Brandon Durán, Acting Senior Minister



Our congregational meetings are sacred gatherings. They are more than the registration, the agenda, the presentations, and the votes. They are holy because we are in this together and between us; among us is Christ. Christ lives in the relationships that hold us together and the Holy Spirit is woven through our communal story.

At our 2021 Annual Meeting we gave voice to our story this past year and affirmed the faithful presence of God throughout it. We did this through a litany; a prayer of call and response. As you read the litany below, I invite you to do as the congregation did at the 2021 Annual Meeting and pray the underlined response.

We entered into the month of May in 2020 with uncertainty. We had been sheltering in place for weeks and had been unable to gather in our sanctuary for Easter. At last year's meeting Pastor David announced his resignation and we faced a future with even more questions. Let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

Throughout this year we've learned new technology and found new ways to connect with God in worship through online platforms and with drive-throughs and drive-ins. Let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've postponed weddings, we missed memorials, and we moved our celebrations into in small, safe bubbles. On All Saints Day we honored the lives taken by COVID and the families wracked with grief. With faith let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've partnered with non-profits to provide COVID tests, to host drive through celebrations, and to feed the hungry. We've partnered with churches to host special worship services. We've welcomed preachers from neighbor islands and from the continent to proclaim the gospel. So let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

When revenue streams dried up, we were faced with financial challenges that led to difficult, deep cuts to our staff. We remain unsure about how and when those revenues will return. Still, let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

Throughout this past year we've shared thousands of calls and cards to show our care and keep our connection with one another. In this way we proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've grieved the loss of treasured traditions. Annual programs that stretched back for decades were canceled. We miss our chancel choir, our worship team, the embraces at the beginning of a service, the shared snacks around Aloha Lanai. We've lost time and we ache for what once was. But we still proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've seen new volunteers rise up to share their voices in worship, to offer their heart in care, and to lend their strength in acts of service. The church has risen in response to our community's needs. Let us boldly proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've created new small groups, launched a summer seminarian internship, and birthed new ministries. Let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've had loved ones die, sometimes before we even knew they were ill. Friends have left O'ahu before we got a chance to properly say Aloha 'oe. With hurting hearts we seek comfort as we proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We've worn the masks, kept our distance and gotten our shots. We reopened slowly, followed new protocols, and patiently hoped for when this time of separation will come to an end. Let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*

We responded to God's goodness in our lives by supporting our church with our finances and with our resources of time and expertise. We've kept the faith.

God is good. God is love. And love never fails. Let us proclaim... *"The steadfast love of God never ceases"*



Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, *Council Chair*

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Psalm 51:10-12



Renewal, rejuvenation, evolution . . . these words have been very much on my mind as we enter a new Council year. As we bid aloha to Council members who have completed their terms of service and welcome in new members, we are charged with building on the strong foundation that has been laid by those who have gone before us. We are emerging from a time that has been transformative. It has created an appreciation for the very core of who we are, while opening our eyes to the possibilities of who we can become. The challenge before the incoming Council will be to meld these ideas into a plan of action that will fortify our church this year and into the future.

At our Annual Meeting, we elect the Council whose duty, according to our bylaws, will be “to conduct, manage, and control the affairs, programs, funds, business, and property of the Church” over the coming year. It is a weighty responsibility. We are grateful for the trust you have placed in us and ask for your continued prayers. And we encourage your input; email council-chair@centralunionchurch.org.

Here are some highlights from our last Council meeting:

Central Union Preschool passed NAEYC accreditation with flying colors and is now accredited through May 1, 2026. Nine of ten standards were marked with an adjusted score of 99-100%. Summer enrollment is full with 104 students and admissions for SY 21-22 is being finalized. Budgeted enrollment is set at 172 keiki.

The World Missions Committee is bringing forward Boxes of Hope for Beirut, a mission of boxes comprised of toys, snacks and other items to lift the spirits of the children of Lebanon following the devastating explosion experienced in Beirut last year. The committee would like to ask the congregation for donations to make boxes for Children. There is a sponsor willing to match church members’ gifts, one match for every two gifts. Each box costs \$60.00. Donations will be collected during May.

Serving Aloha - The Serving Aloha Project originated to assist those experiencing food insecurity as a result of the COVID pandemic. The number of households receiving food each week continues to exceed 500, but many of those receiving are kupuna. Volunteers are needed, especially those willing to help in leadership positions, organizing various aspects of the food delivery.

Statement of Faith Ad Hoc Committee –our bylaws state “the Church shall have a Statement of Faith as may be adopted by the members from time to time.” While the bylaws committee did not include the statement of faith within the bylaws, the Council agreed that an ad hoc committee be formed to engage the congregation in a study and review of language for this important document.

Dazzle and Lei Day at CUPS

Veronique Braithwaite, *Preschool Director*

Central Union Preschool kicked off its annual DAZZLE 2021 on April 23rd! As we all continue to navigate and manage through the challenges presented during the past year, we celebrated our perseverance and resilience as a church school community. With creative and resolute efforts, CUPS presented Dazzle 2021 “Tapas-to-Go” in which guests arrived on campus via drive through to pick up their tapas meals & beverages crafted by a few featured local chefs, enjoying the delicious bites in the comfort of their home. It was an evening of camaraderie and support which also included an online auction for bidding of wonderful handmade classroom treasures and various items. Thank you to all those that supported the cause!



May Day is Lei Day in Hawai'i....as the month of May is upon us, Central Union Preschool presented a virtual celebration to honor the tradition of celebrating Hawai'i nei and the aloha spirit. Each classroom of keiki shared some special aspect about our 8-island home through a mele or dance. Family and friends had the opportunity to ZOOM in, attend and view the virtual performance of smiling, dancing keiki in fragrant flora, fauna and aloha attire. Special mahalo to Gavin Moffat and Cayanna Herrera for their collaborative efforts to assist with the virtual production and showing!



Boxes of Hope for Beirut



Reem Bassous (a World Mission ministry member) and her older brother, **Ronnie Bassous** grew up during the Lebanese civil war. (1975-1990).

They know what post-traumatic shock feels like to a child.

So when the world's largest non-nuclear explosion took place in Beirut (8/4/20) Ronnie's first response was to care for the children.



The charity, **New Heights**, which **Ronnie Bassous** had founded in the early 2000's www.new-heights.me quickly identified 250 children from 173 families in the blast area.



Each box contains art supplies, hygiene items, a toy or two and child focused treats.

They chose to respond by bringing a monthly box of hope (and goodies) to each child. The box is brought by volunteers who strive to support the family emotionally, socially and spiritually. They try to link them to a local church that can continue to show forth God's love.

Each month the box itself is designed to be cut up and reconstructed — into a project. December was Christmas tree, and nativity scene.

The cost per box is \$60. Our goal is to provide boxes for each child for one month. The good news is we have an anonymous donor who will match us one box for every two we give— **so we only need to raise \$12,000!**

*If you would like to support this cause, please send a check with **World Mission: Boxes of Hope** in the memo line to*

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Attn: Accounting



“Kaulike”

During the month of May, we are focusing on our value-words. During the week of May 2nd, the word was “Kaulike” (Justice). Friends of Central Union talked about how “Kaulike” looked to them. To view all of the videos, visit the DEVOTIONALS page on our website. www.centralunionchurch.org. We thank those who took time to share their thoughts!



Recap of Faith Action's Legislative Priorities for 2021

Evie Hao, *Faith Action*



Three different Faith Action Task Forces were busy at the Legislature this year. A full description of both their “wins” and their “losses” is available on the Faith Action website at: <https://www.faithactionhawaii.org/post/faith-action-legislative-wrap-up-2021>.

The losses, unfortunately, were several. Very briefly, the two task forces with “wins” were these:

The Housing Now! Task Force enjoyed limited success. The Legislature passed HB 286, which forces REITs to declare their Hawaii-based revenue. Bill passage means we will finally document how much in total corporate taxes REITs would pay.

The Environmental Justice Task Force celebrated the passage of Senate Concurrent Resolution 44, which makes Hawaii the first state to declare a climate emergency. Also passed was HB 1142, which creates a funding mechanism for the installation of electric vehicle charging systems. It is hoped this will encourage the purchase of more electric vehicles.

Many community advocates were disappointed in what they considered to be the Legislature's inadequate response to many other issues facing Hawaii, such as climate change, affordable housing, housing security, living wage, agriculture, food security, public education, homelessness, gun safety, long-term care and government transparency. But, Faith Action realizes that very few bills get passed in their first legislative session. It usually takes years, and that is why advocates must be persistent if they hope to ultimately be successful. Faith Action looks forward to the 2022 legislative session and is already making plans for it.

Meanwhile, even those bills which passed the Legislature will not become law until signed by the Governor. Stay tuned!

Remembering Our Saints

Please remember these Saints and hold their families in your prayers:

Sandra Wong died on January 29, 2021. A memorial service is planned in the **Sanctuary at 10 am on Saturday, May 15th**.

Nancy Winifred Oakes Ekern died on February 25, 2021. The hospice agency is arranging cremation, and the family plans a small private gathering once they are all able to travel safely.

Mary “Kay” Hollier died on March 3, 2021. She resided on Mercer Island at the time of her passing. Kay's children were raised in Central Union's community. Her children attended Central Union pre-school; went on to be in the youth groups, and were members of the church choir. They have very fond memories of sunrise Easter service, Palm Sunday, White Gift service at Christmas, candlelight Christmas Eve service. Kay remained a resident of Hawaii until 2011. She moved to the mainland after her husband's death. She continued to remain a member in good standing even after moving. Central Union holds a very dear place in the family's hearts

James C. Wo, passed peacefully on April 11, 2021. He is survived by wife Juanita, daughter Julia (Brian), son Ric (Margie), son David, grandsons James and Shane, and grand- daughter Jasmine. There is to be a private service. No monetary gifts, no flowers. Arrangements Provided By: Nuuanu Memorial Park & Mortuary LLC.

