



The Spire

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

April 2022

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Pastor's Page

Rev. Brandon Durán, Acting Senior Minister

"Sing to the Lord a new song, for God has done marvelous things;

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.

Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;

Let them all sing before the Lord..." - Psalm 98

March 22nd, in 2020, was our first Sunday in lockdown. The sanctuary doors were closed as we transitioned to our online service. For seven months, the sanctuary waited for us to return and worship. On October 25th, we held our first in-person worship service of the pandemic era. We came together with a structured protocol, an abundance of caution, and many adjustments to the pre-pandemic service. Over the next 17 months our worship evolved. Our procedures have shifted, and the elements of our worship service have expanded. At times, surges have slowed or regressed our strides. Yet, by God's grace, we have grown.

Over two years, after that first lockdown, our sanctuary is once again filled with the church's voice unified in song. April 3rd marks the return of congregational singing. Each week we will add music as we build toward Easter Sunday. We have two years of pent-up singing inside of us. We have so much worship to catch up on that we will need a second in-person worship service.

On Palm Sunday we will re-introduce the 11:00 AM worship to our Sunday morning at Central Union! The service will be held in the Parish Hall and will feature contemporary worship music led by Wade Cambern. The worship service will include liturgical elements that are different from our 9:00 AM in-person or 10:00 AM online services. This service will provide Central Union with one more way to sing a new song of praise.

The 11:00 AM service will follow the same health guidelines as the 9:00 AM in-person service with one exception. The Parish Hall lacks the quality air flow of the Sanctuary. For this reason, we will start with a bit more caution. For the first two weeks, we ask that only those who are vaccinated or who have recently received a negative test result for COVID come to the 11:00 AM service. However, we work on the honor system, the church is built upon trusting God and trusting one another, so we will not check documents or bar entry. After the first two weeks we will reevaluate our health protocols for the Parish Hall.

Church, the last two years, has had its share of difficulties and unprecedented challenges. However, during these same two years, God has found new ways to provide for us; God's faithfulness has been seen in people we could not have imagined; and the hard times have made it easier to see when God's goodness has shined.

"God has done marvelous things, let us sing to the Lord a new song!"



Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

John 8:31–32 – Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

As part of our devotional time at our last Council meeting, we each received a scripture and prayer from a religious leader in Ukraine struggling with the suffering and destruction of war in his or her country. Ruslan Maliuta, strategic networks liaison at One Hope is connected to ministries helping orphans and unaccompanied children to evacuate from areas of Russian assault. He noted the above verse which has sustained him and wrote, “But beyond Russia, we must pray that the lies and deception that characterize so many issues, identities, and histories will drive Christians to better discipleship in how to be the light.”

How to be the light. . . what a challenge is laid before us. Yet, this is our truth. We are a resurrection people. The good news of the empty tomb is that nothing can contain God’s light. As we enter this Easter season, may we at Central Union Church continue to be a beacon of light and hope, proclaiming our truth that God’s love never fails.

Here is some news from the Council:

As the Council continues to explore ways to maximize revenues, we were fortunate to have speak as our guest, attorney Jeff Piper, whose expertise is in areas of business law, with an emphasis on the representation of tax-exempt organizations. This educational presentation was extremely informative in providing parameters for the Council to consider as it evaluates various ideas.

The Honolulu Marshallese United Church of Christ began sharing space at Central Union Windward on Sunday, March 13th. Their worship service in the sanctuary begins at 1:00 PM and they also utilize space in the Fellowship Hall for Sunday School classes. We are so happy to be able to work with one of our sister UCC churches as well as make progress in our goal to fully maximize the beautiful spaces we have available on our campuses.

The Preschool will hold its annual fundraising event, Dazzle on April 22, 2022. Dazzle will be an in-person event held on the CUC campus. It will be

outdoors and will feature about 13 local eateries. In addition, there will be an online auction.

The Diaconate has approved support of the next Hawaii Cohort (2022) of the Theological Education for Leadership (TEL) of the Pacific School of Religion (PSR) with a grant of \$15,000 from the Deacon’s Theological Scholarship Fund. The grant supports six students through one year of a two-year cycle of on-line courses that focuses on the preparation of leaders for congregations.

Children’s Ministry will be holding its annual Easter Egg Hunt fundraiser for local charity. Starting in 2019, Children’s Ministry began partnering with Community Ministry to bless a local non-profit organization that works directly with the community to help those in need, and have used the Easter Egg Hunt as our main ‘fundraising’ effort. Each Easter egg collected by the children and returned at the end of the egg hunt represents a set amount that will be donated to the organization of choice. Children’s Ministry is also planning to put out donation boxes at the Easter Egg Hunt to benefit this year’s charity. Any money collected on Easter during the Egg Hunt will be added to our total donation amount. The organization we have chosen to bless this year is the Hawaii Food Bank. This will not only bless the food bank but will also help to ensure that programs like Serving Aloha are able to continue.

The Youth participated in a Mālama ‘Āina service activity over spring break, joining a group at a small farm and lo’i kalo in Ka’ōnohi (Pearlridge) to learn and work on the land. During the break, youth volunteered at the Serving Aloha food distribution. The youth also had an opportunity to join other youth at sister church, Kawaiahao, for an evening of fellowship!

The Buildings and Grounds committee and staff have been in discussions with Glen Mason regarding the Mason Report and are prioritizing



and looking at recommended vendors.

We are having sonic tomography done to the Kiawe tree by arborist Steve Nimz & Assoc to assist in determining the condition of the wood. The kitchen repairs have been completed and the Department of Health has signed off on it. The Clock Tower has been temporarily repaired and permanent repairs are being explored. Screens have been installed by volunteers on the Windward campus. Wood was installed by a carpenter, and primed and painted by volunteers so the screens could be installed.

The Annual meeting of our congregation will be held May 1, 2022. Please mark your calendars for this important meeting in the life of our church.

Road to Emmaus

Martha Balkin, Don Clifford, Dona Hanaike, Greg Sato, Carl Schlack, and David Yee,

Vision Team

April 2022

In the fall of 2021, the Vision Team conducted a Learning Tree regarding the future of Central Union Church. In that Zoom meeting, the Team identified the following challenges:

1. An aging congregation.
2. Facilities critical to revenue generation in need of repair.
3. Significant gifts coming from a shrinking demographic of the Congregation.
4. An over reliance on income from sources outside of the Congregation that make a church vulnerable to change.
5. Over time, a revenue stream that does not meet long-term needs.
6. The “right sizing” of costs through personnel cuts but at the sacrifice of current and future mission.

In response, we received many heartfelt comments through our email, vision@centralunionchurch.org. We wanted to share those ideas with the Congregation, along with our responsive thoughts.

Create a Consortium

“Many churches face the same maintenance problems and supply expenses. Churches in the same area should form a consortium to pool their needs to buy services and goods in bulk.”

Vision Team: We will ask the Council to explore the issue with other churches.

Legacy Giving

“Develop a planned giving campaign.”

Vision Team: We agree. Greg Boxold in the fall of 2019 led the last campaign, but he has since relocated to the mainland. The Council has recreated this committee and since September 28, 2021 has issued a call for a Chair and members.

Grant Writing

“Defer the costs of repairs by obtaining grants.”

Vision Team: The Church Council has organized a Grant-Writing Committee and since September 28, 2021 has sought a Chair and members. The Council hopes there are grant-writing opportunities for the refurbishment of the organ, for the upkeep of the historic clock and bell tower, and for the care of the exceptional trees on the town campus. Even if all of these grants are fulfilled, the Church has unmet needs.

CUC as Wedding Venue

“Revitalize the website with photos and testimonials to rebuild wedding revenue.”

Vision Team: In its heyday, CUC was a ‘destination wedding’ site with revenue driven by Japanese visitors. Competitors have responded by creating their own one-stop site with all services – photography, hair and make-up, reception and honeymoon. See, <https://www.hiltonhawaiianvillage.com/weddings> While it has been difficult to compete with these marketing juggernauts, we do see an increase in bookings.

While there are opportunities for local weddings, the current trend is to have outdoor weddings (beach or mountains). We believe that like many fashions, trends will change and we should be prepared for the return of church weddings. We are exploring opportunities to increase destination weddings from mainland U.S. visitors, as this market may rebound before the international market.

Transform the Sanctuary into a Revival Center

“Move the ceiling and stage lights from the Parish Hall to the Sanctuary for an entertainment center. Re-purpose the Parish Hall for storage and offices in order to minimize maintenance costs.”

Vision Team: We will ask the staff and Council for their input on this use of the Sanctuary. The Council has been evaluating ways to increase facility usage, while maintaining our sacred spaces.

Thrift Shop

“Provide funding to allow the Thrift Shop to sell its clothing on Poshmark and other internet retailers.”

Vision Team: We encourage the Women’s League to present this idea to the Council for funding.

Create a CUPS at the Windward Campus

“CUPS is a premier preschool. Build a similar school at CUW.”

Vision Team: We are studying the feasibility of the idea.

New Endowment Strategy

“Using the endowment as collateral, borrow funds since interest rates are low and invest the borrowed funds in the stock market.”

“Change the investment custodian to reduce fees and change the investment strategy, moving from “growth” stocks to “income” stocks for a stronger short term return.”

Vision Team: These are reasonable investment strategies for a risk tolerant investor. We do not believe the congregation has the risk appetite nor investment expertise to pursue these strategies. Further, many endowment funds are restricted endowments that cannot be collateralized. If the endowment grows, pursuit of one or more of these strategies should be re-visited.

As stated earlier the Vision Team believes the Church’s future rests on a number of solutions with everyone working together. Redevelopment of both campuses is not an ideal solution but one that must be discussed. The window for action is narrow but possible.



Pilgrim Chapel

Rosemary Eberhardt, Central Union Church Archivist and Historian

As you enter the Sanctuary, through the wrought iron gates, there are two small rooms on either side of the narthex before entering the nave. To the right is the Bride's Room named after Mr. & Mrs. Conrad C. Von Hamm, members and benefactors of CUC. To the left is the Pilgrim Chapel dedicated on October 6, 1940 to commemorate the transfer of letter of 150 members of the former Igreja Portugueza Evangelica (Portuguese Evangelical Church) to CUC.

The Punchbowl area had become home to many Portuguese. In 1887 Central Union lay members started a Sunday School for Portuguese immigrant children which grew into a Portuguese Mission. CUC and the Hawaiian Evangelical Association called to Hawaii a Portuguese-English speaking minister The Rev. Antonio Soares who served 1890-1928. P.C. Jones, CUC member paid for land and the construction of a church built on Miller and Punchbowl Streets across from Queen's Hospital. The name of the church was changed to Pilgrim Church in 1928 when The Rev. T. Markham Talmage arrived.

In 1902, from this congregation, the Punchbowl Easter Sunrise Services originated when a group of teenage boys and their Sunday School teacher trudged up Puowaina (Hill of Sacrifice) in the early morning to celebrate the Resurrection of Christ.



In 2015, Central Union celebrated the 75th anniversary of the merger with Pilgrim Church which prompted the move of their cornerstone into Pilgrim Chapel, preparation of a display case containing artifacts still located in the Sanctuary, and a tour of of Makiki Cemetery. Another story...

Maundy Thursday: April 14th at 5:30 PM

Join us on Maundy Thursday, April 14, 2022 at 5:30 pm for a time of reflection as we share a meal together. We will gather on the lanai of the Women's Building for a family style worship and simple bento dinner.

Please RSVP to **Natasha** at 808-440-3004 or natasha-dator@centralunionchurch.org. Be sure to include the number of attendees and whether you'd like a regular or vegetarian bento.

Tenebrae: Good Friday, April 15 at 7PM

Tenebrae is a Latin word for "darkness" or "shadows." This powerful service will be offered on Good Friday, at 7 pm, both in-person in the Sanctuary, as well as on-line. We listen to Jesus' last words from the cross, accompanied by the gradual extinguishing of candles. The service is left unfinished, in darkness, because the story isn't over until Easter Day.



Oh God, What Now?

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

On February 26, the Hawaii Conference of the United Church of Christ held a Church Leaders Event. Representatives from UCC churches throughout the state gathered to discuss, “**Oh God, What Now?**” This annual Leaders Event took a different focus this year, providing an opportunity for leaders to connect with one another and be encouraged in their roles. Attending from Central Union Church were Reem Bassous, Don Clifford, Evie Hao, Tom Kiyabu and Martha Balkin.

The discussions stemmed from two articles written by Susan Beaumont: “Leading in an In-between Season” and “Innovating into an Unknown Future”. Here are some takeaways from the conference:

- While the pandemic has highlighted and accelerated the pace of change that many churches are experiencing, we have been seeing societal shifts for some time now. Questions surround what church membership means for those that don’t engage with the church through its campus and what discipleship looks like in an era where people are no longer interested in attending programs.
- We are all in this together. Churches large and small, in urban and rural environments, are experiencing many of the same challenges and share many of the same fears. One refrain repeated often throughout the day, “when we reopen, will people come back?” There is a fear among all churches that if people are not physically present in church, they may lose their connection to church. It points to the changing model of being church, where corporate worship on campus once formed the centerpiece of congregational life. We are challenged to incorporate new digital connections, while sustaining the traditions we hold dear.
- The future of the church is undefined, but the observation was made that although the pandemic has changed how we conduct service, we are no different than many generations before us who have faced hardships that also put stresses on society. In the past, people learned to adjust and adapt; we must also.
- In moving into an undetermined future, our lodestar can be a focus on moving from self-preservation to ministry, to discern what we as a congregation can do to be “useful in the Lord’s eyes” and to be the people that “open the doors of the church” welcoming our community and our world into God’s grace and love.

E A S T E R

SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2022

9 AM **TRADITIONAL WORSHIP - SANCTUARY**

10 AM **EASTER EGG HUNT - PRESCHOOL LAWN**

Meet at Ewa & Diamond Head gates behind Sanctuary

10 AM **CENTRAL UNION WINDWARD**

10 AM **ONLINE** (Facebook or centralunionchurch.org)

11 AM **CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP - PARISH HALL**

You are invited to bring fresh flowers to add to the adorning of the cross!

**We ask that 11 AM attendees be vaccinated or have recently received a negative test result for COVID. As the church is built upon trusting God and one another, we will abide by the honor system and NOT check documents or bar entry.*

Easter Day is the glorious celebration of
Jesus Christ’s triumph over the grave.
His victory over sin and death
points ahead to a future
resurrection for all
of us who are
united to him
by faith.

*Alleluia!
He is Risen!*

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Notice of Central Union Church Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the members of Central Union Church will be held on **Sunday, May 1, 2022**, immediately following the **special in-person 10:00 AM service**. There will be no 9:00 AM or 11:00 AM service that day. The meeting will begin at 11:00 AM (or as soon thereafter as registration is complete) online and in the Parish Hall of the Honolulu Campus. Members may choose to attend the Annual Meeting in-person or virtually via Zoom. The information needed to attend the Annual Meeting via Zoom will be provided in a future notice. For the Annual Meeting to proceed, a quorum of not less than 100 members must participate in-person and/or virtually via Zoom.

Please make your attendance a priority.

CUC Council Nominees 2022

In accordance with our Bylaws, the Nominations and Governance Committee has nominated, and the Council has unanimously approved, the following members to serve on the Council in the positions designated below. (NOTE: Candidates up for election by the Congregation at the May 1, 2022 Annual Meeting are listed in **red**; all others are continuing to serve existing terms for which they have been elected):

OFFICER POSITIONS

(2-year term ending 2024):

Chair: Carl Schlack

Vice-Chair: **Greg Sato**

OFFICER POSITIONS

(2-year term commencing 2022 and ending 2024):

Treasurer: **David Yee**

Secretary: **Reem Bassous**

Head of the Diaconate: (to be appointed)

AT LARGE COUNCIL MEMBERS

Class of 2023

1. Maurina Ludwig
2. Carol Egan
3. Sam Failla

Class of 2024

1. Don Clifford
2. **Miguel Asuncion**
3. **Mary Calantoc**

Class of 2025

1. **Janice Wakamatsu**
2. **Nathan Wong**
3. **Austen Cook**

Remembering Our Saints

Please hold the family of **Harriet Rotz**, who died on March 3, 2022, in your prayers. A private beach-side service is being held by the family at a later date.

LOVE NEVER FAILETH