

The Spire

Photograph by: Kristen Young

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

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Pastor's Page

Rev. Brandon Durán, Acting Senior Minister

Janus had two faces. This ancient Roman god was believed to have one face that looked to the future and another face that looked to the past. From Janus we get the name, January.

However, in January, our culture tends to focus more on the future. One could say that Baby New Year gets more attention than Father Time.

While I look forward to the possibilities ahead of us, I do not want to forget what we come through. I have been pouring over articles that recap 2021. The year was full of events with global significance.

Increased Vaccination Rates, Reopening and Reconnecting, Record-Shattering Heat Waves, Catastrophic Flooding, The Capitol Riots, Mars Landing, #StopAsianHate, Explosion in Lebanon, Summer Olympians Sharing Gold, COVID Variants, The Great Resignation, and so much more.

We have celebrated, mourned, strived, and endured. As I looked over the various lists, I realized that in addition to these macro events were the much more personal and impactful events that touch our lives. This year was full of events that altered the trajectory of our individual lives.

Family Gatherings, Diagnosis and Treatment, Relationship Beginnings and Endings, Employment Status Transitions, Births and Deaths, Moves and more.

The marking of a new year is an opportunity to acknowledge those events that have shaped who we are. It is also the opportunity to reaffirm and renew our identity. An identity that has been influenced by the events of this last year but is

nevertheless solid at its core. An identity that will give us the wisdom and strength to navigate what's ahead.

Perhaps the most impactful event in my life this year was the death of my Dad. I am still learning how his passing affects my life and the life of my family. Nevertheless, I am still his son and the lessons I learned from him remain true and important. Those lessons and the memory of his love will be guiding lights in the new year.

Friends, we are beloved children of God, entrusted with the care of creation and called to love one another. God has blessed us with the talents, relationships, and the power to live into our identity. The events of 2021 may have spurred our creativity, tested our resiliency, or taught us vulnerability. But the challenges and blessings of the last year have not changed your identity in God. My prayer for us is that the new year would be a moment for us to find our footing, fan the light within us, and lift our countenance to God ready for the calling Love has for us in 2022.

"The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul." — G.K. CHESTERTON



Council Talking Points

Martha Balkin, Council Chair

He 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



I closed my January 2021 Spire article in this way, “We step forward in faith, trusting that God has great things in store for Central Union Church. It’s our 2021 resolution, to step boldly into the new creation that God has put before us.” In this time of great uncertainty, I am more convinced than ever of the belief expressed in Ecclesiastes. This has been a year that started off with great promise as vaccinations became available; and yet we have seen the virus spike, recede, spike, recede and spike again. I now pray that we are entering an endemic phase, a phrase that was totally foreign to me a year ago. What remains steadfast is our belief that there is beauty in God’s creation, and that each day is a new creation full of opportunity. We have seen those opportunities blossom and grow in 2021 and we trust that God will continue to work at Central Union in 2022.

Here are some highlights from 2021: Central Union Preschool passed its NAEYC accreditation with flying colors and celebrated its 93rd birthday! Outreach continued as World Missions distributed Boxes of Hope in Beirut and Serving Aloha fed on average 450 to 500 households per week. The accounting firewall with Central Union Windward came down and service to the Windward community continued as a ministry of CUC. Our Diaconate, Senior Services and other volunteers found ways to connect with our elderly and/or frail members. The Vision Team created a vision Statement guide: “We are Stewards of God’s blessing to Central Union Church and we shall move forward, in Faith, to expand those blessings in service to others.” The congregation approved a restatement of the Bylaws, adopted Standing Rules and amendments to the Articles of Incorporation. Our Children’s Ministry held a week-long Compassion Camp for our keiki. Our Pohnpeian Ministry provided service online that reached many in Pohnpei as well as returning to in-person service. We welcomed new staff as Dr. Jace Saplan joined as Director of Choirs, Devin Omura became our AV tech and Orlando Kehl joined the Buildings and Grounds staff serving the Windward and Honolulu campus. We developed our online services and held in-person worship adhering to safety protocols to keep our members safe. And this is just a sample of the many things that occurred throughout the year at our church.

The next order of business for our congregation will be the approval of the annual budget. Our Budget meeting will be held on January 30, 2022. We will be conducting a hybrid in-person and on-line meeting to try to accommodate as many members as possible. We require a quorum of 100 members to conduct business. Please make your attendance a priority for this very important meeting.

As we look ahead to 2022, my resolution echoes that of last year, that we boldly step into the new creation that God has put before us, trusting in God’s Love that Never Fails.



Welcome Sam!

Please join with the Council in welcoming Sam Okita as Central Union Church Comptroller. Sam is joining the CUC staff starting Wednesday, January 5. He comes to us with over 24 years Accounting experience. His previous positions have included serving as Controller and Director of Finance in law firms and the visitor industry. He has had responsibility for overseeing all finance and accounting functions including annual budget development, financial analysis and overseeing the audit.

He has been actively involved in Family Promise at his church and is looking forward to working in a position where he can give back to the community. We are very excited to have Sam join the CUC team and happy that he feels called to apply his skills and experience at Central Union.

Youth Adventures

Kristen Young, Youth Director

This past Advent season, we partnered with youth groups from several sister churches to explore Charles Dickens' classic, A Christmas Carol, for A Spirit-Filled Advent. The ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, and Yet to Come, helped us look at our own faith timelines and reflect on hope, peace, joy, and love. In The Muppet Christmas Carol, characters sing, "In all the places you find love, it feels like Christmas!" In all the places we receive and spread aloha, it can feel like Christmas! Just as Ebenezer Scrooge pledges at the end of A Christmas Carol: May we honor Christmas in our hearts and try to keep it all the year!

'Twas the fourth day of Christmas and all through the night, Youth took time to admire the lights in their sight. We wish you a year that is just as bright!



Christmas Eve Family Services!

This year, for the first time, both the 5:30 and 8:30 Christmas Eve services were geared for families and children! At the 5:30 service, we were excited to host Paniolo Parties and their small menagerie of barnyard animals as a part of our Nativity scene. During both the 5:30 and 8:30pm services we were blessed to have wonderful families participate in acting out the Nativity, as Pastors Brandon and Mary read the familiar story. It was such a blessing to participate in these beautiful services and to share Christmas Eve with our Central Union Church 'ohana!



The Most Wonderful Time of the Year!

Veronique Braithwaite, Preschool Director

‘Tis the season and Central Union Church Preschool keiki know how to get into the spirit for this very special time of year! The children and faculty enjoyed an array of activities from SNOW Foam Day, gift making for family & friends, graham cracker houses and a visit with Santa Claus! The Preschool was blessed to have the opportunity to celebrate this Advent season with our annual Preschool Christmas Chapel presented virtually under the direction and facilitation of CUPS music teacher, Cayanna Herrera and Devin Omura, CUC multimedia technician. Through their gift of song and words, the keiki remind us of the true meaning of the season, the birth of baby Jesus! CUPS faculty, staff and keiki wish you and yours a most joyous, healthy, and blessed new year!





So Now What...?

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministry*

For the last few months we have shared our vision of intergenerational worship. And while I believe we have a solid foundation to transition to this new-old way of worshiping together, I know it will take some time and flexibility to fully live into the vision. Adjusting our Sunday school time to enable families to worship together, this very reality presents new challenges. As a parent, worshiping with a small child is a challenge! The concerns of parents and children alike are valid and real! Sitting through worship will be a new experience for many children and like all new experiences, it can be daunting. As a congregation, we have already shared our commitment to welcoming families with children of all ages into our worship service with joy! So today, I would like to speak directly to

parents and children! I have a few tips that I hope will make Sunday worship a joy filled and precious time for all.

When my daughter was born, I began reassessing what church would look like for us now, with a little one in our arms. While I had a wonderful example of worshiping as a family from my parents, I found myself reflecting on what had made worship successful for my siblings and I. Here are my tips for parents:

- Sit toward the front of the church. Children like to see what is going on and sitting near the front enables them to truly participate in worship.
- Pick up a children's bulletin for your child! We have been passing out children's bulletins for several months and encourage you to use this resource each week. Each week, we try to match some portion of the scripture or sermon theme to the children's bulletins. Check them out!
- Pack a special bag just for church! Include activities, books, coloring books/sheets, etc. that are only used for quiet time in the church service. I have found it helpful to pack a small children's Bible or Bible story coloring book. Every couple of months, switch out activities and surprise your child with something they haven't experienced yet.
- Encourage your child to express in drawing or writing what they see and hear in the worship service. If your child is school age, encourage them to take notes about their worship experience. We are currently providing note taking sheets for older children that make jotting down their thoughts easy!
- Draw with your child. While this may be distracting for some, for others, committing their worship experience to paper with a quick sketch may help to focus their minds and hearts.
- Encourage even the smallest children to participate. Encourage them to stand and sing the hymns (when we are safely able to sing together once again!), to sit quietly or even kneel for prayer if that is appropriate, or to join in with any congregational responses such as the Lord's Prayer.
- Remember, you and your child(ren) are loved and accepted here in our worship space! Jesus himself welcomed children encouraged the mothers of his day to bring their little ones to Him. I pray each child and parent feels loved and welcome each and every week as we worship together.

Parents, please know that I will be watching for you and keeping you in my prayers as we try a new model of worshiping together. Please do not hesitate to let me know how I can better serve you and your children!

Notice of the Annual Budget Meeting

On **January 30th** we will gather for our Annual Budget meeting at **11:00am**. The meeting will be a hybrid gathering and you can attend online, via Zoom, or in-person. Whether you plan on attending online or in-person, please register for the meeting. *If you are planning on attending in-person, we ask that you be fully vaccinated.*

Together we will give thanks for the ways God has provided for the church and we will adopt a plan to move forward with faith. The difficulties of this last year have revealed some of our strengths as the body of Christ. The challenges before us invite us to dream and to plan for how we can use our gifts to glorify God and bless our neighbors. Central Union has always been at its best when we have worked together and followed Christ's lead. Let us continue to live into this deep truth by coming together at the start of 2022 at our Annual Budget meeting. This gathering will be about more than line items and charts, it will be about how we will live into the calling God has given us.

Please look for upcoming eblasts in your email or contact the church office at (808) 941-0957 x3004 in order to receive:

The Zoom link for the meeting,

The registration process instructions,

The summarized budget and access to the detailed budget.

Please make your attendance a priority as we require a quorum of 100 members to conduct our church's business. Mark your calendars now for this very important meeting in the life of our church.



Vaccine Clinic

The first vaccine clinic we hosted was met with such great reception that we decided to do it again! COVID-19 vaccines, boosters, and flu shots will be available through a mobile clinic at our Honolulu campus on Sunday, January 9, from 11am-1pm. Walk-ins are available.

See you there!

Remembering Our Saints

Please hold the family of **Priscilla Kesi-Tiumalu**, who died on Friday, December 17, 2021, in your prayers. Priscilla and her family were very active in the 11 am service before they moved to the mainland in July 2020. A service is planned in Las Vegas on January 14, 2022.

Please also keep in your prayers, the family of **Robert "Bob" Hallman**, who died at the age of 61, on Friday, December 24, 2021. Bob was the son of Roy and Nyle Hallman. Bob earned a scholarship from CUC's Diaconate which enabled him to go to seminary. He went on to be a pastor on Kauai. Services will be held on Saturday, January 8, 2022, on Kauai.



LOVE NEVER FAILETH