



August 31, 2022

My calling to Central Union began in 2015 while I was serving a supportive, vibrant church in Seattle. It was around the time of Emma's birth that Central Union first came onto our radar. We were intrigued by the associate pastor position, the staff at Central Union, the diversity of the congregation, and the prospect of living in Hawai'i.

Janelle and I wrestled with the idea of leaving what was known and comfortable for a new calling. There were so many questions. It was not an easy decision, but it became increasingly clear that coming to Central Union was the next step for us.

We came with the hope that our children would be embraced by the community. We planned on their educational journey beginning with CUPS. We wanted them to learn the values of aloha and 'ohana from their school and the special people of this church.

We were welcomed with an abundance of aloha. I fondly remember Janelle and little Emma engulfed in lei at the airport. Members of the church helped us settle in, loaned us a vehicle, provided meals, and helped care for our little ones.

We also came wondering if Hawai'i would be the final destination for our family. Blessings abound here but we also felt far from loved ones on the mainland. We did not have an exact plan, but we believed a time would come to evaluate where we would live long term.

In 2019, our conversations about the next steps for our family were increasing. We had felt small nudges here and there. Was God getting us ready to make a move? Perhaps it was time to leave in order to be closer to grandparents and cousins before the kids got too big.

In 2020, our plans shifted dramatically when Pastor David announced his resignation. I did not know what this meant for our family long-term, but I did know that I did not want to leave the church while it was finding its footing with lockdowns and pandemic realities. I believed the interim period would last 12-24 months and that I could be of service to the church during that period of time.

Over the last two years it has been phenomenal to witness the congregation care for each other while finding the physical and spiritual strength to care for the wider community. I praise God for the ways you all have rallied. Throughout this time, my family has also felt a special depth of care and encouragement. You have brought joy and strength to our family.

As the Senior Minister Search Committee prepares to enter the next stage of its process, I have been frequently asked if I am going to apply. Being a part of Central Union has been a tremendous blessing. Yet after much prayer and reflection, I believe the time has come for me to step aside. Just as we felt God calling us to Hawai'i seven years ago, we have increasingly felt called to be closer to our extended family through service at a church in California.

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

Central Union Church, Honolulu • 1660 S. Beretania Street • Honolulu, HI 96826 • 808.941.0957

Central Union Church, Windward • 38 Kaneohe Bay Drive • Kailua, HI 96734

<http://www.centralunionchurch.org>

This was a difficult decision to take hold of. The discernment of God's calling is an ongoing process that invites us to look at the larger arc of our lives. When I look at the larger narrative, I see that it is time for me to step towards a new call. I am not leaving because of some problem or issue. I am not leaving to advance my career. I am stepping aside simply because my family and I believe it's time.

Some may think I'm missing out. To them I say, it's true, Central Union is on the cusp of a great vision that will enliven this gifted congregation. Some may say that I am leaving because I could not handle the pressures of a large church. To them I say, the last two years have been difficult for all pastors, but the Central Union staff is fantastic, and the lay leaders of our church are phenomenal. Some may grieve and some may be excited for a new minister. To all I say, Central Union is a wonderfully diverse congregation, but let us be unified in this way, let us take the emotions, the stories, and hopes and give them to God. Let your words build one another up and let your actions reflect Christ's way of love.

Central Union is a blessed church. It has been an honor and a joy to serve with you as your Acting Senior Minister. I see clearly that Central Union's cup is filled with an inspiring history, and it is overflowing with potential for the future. Your continued steps towards humility, trust, and honesty will lead you to realizing that potential. I am saddened that I will not be here to see the next amazing chapter in your history, but I will be your loudest cheerleader from afar. I have no doubt that your God given gifts and skills will shine into the community like the light from the Spire.

My last Sunday at Central Union will be November 20th. I am working with the Rev. Mary Herbig and Council Chair Carl Schlack to craft a transition plan that will include additional clergy and a modified staffing structure to ensure that programs and services will continue without interruption. There will be more details in the coming weeks.

As we move through this transition and as we await the next Senior Minister candidate, let us not do so with hands wringing in worry or brows furrowed in consternation. Let Central Union do what Central Union has done so ably in the past. Let us open our hands to serve, let us lift our countenance and voice to God, let us trust that the Holy Spirit who has been faithful to you for generations will be faithful yet again, and let us find our footing on the promise that love never fails.

Peace be with us,



The Rev. Bandon Duran,
Acting Sr. Minister

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

Central Union Church, Honolulu • 1660 S. Beretania Street • Honolulu, HI 96826 • 808.941.0957

Central Union Church, Windward • 38 Kaneohe Bay Drive • Kailua, HI 96734

<http://www.centralunionchurch.org>