

Central Union Church and Preschool December 2022
"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!" Vol. 92 - No. 12

The Spire

Holiday paintings on the
Thrift Shop window
by Ronny Lynn



In this season of waiting...

Rev. Mary Herbig, Minister of Congregational Life & Care

When I was a child, I, like most children, could not wait for Christmas morning. Every morning, I would race downstairs to open the next door on our Advent

calendar before my

siblings were even out of bed. Every evening, I would inspect the presents under the Christmas tree to see if any new ones had appeared. I just couldn't wait!

As I grow older, I'm beginning to see the beauty that comes in waiting. In those in-between periods, our hearts are opened to new possibilities. Often, when we are waiting, it feels like time slows down, which gives us an opportunity to live in the present. And sometimes, waiting humbles us, as it reminds us that we are not God; we are not able to control everything.

We have entered the sacred season of Advent, these four weeks of waiting before Christmas. Advent invites us to anticipate the coming of Christ into our midst once again. Our waiting is not meant to be passive and comfortable, though. Instead, Advent waiting is intended to be disruptive! During this season, we have the opportunity – individually and as a community – to actively participate in the waiting. We can prepare our hearts through prayer and reading. We can create space in our lives to ponder the wonder of the incarnation. We can find ways to live out hope, peace, joy, and love in the wider community. We can wait together – actively, simply, and gratefully.

Still, waiting is hard – and we are doing an awful lot of it at Central Union right now. We are waiting for the Christ-Child...and we are also waiting for our settled senior minister.

Fortunately, there are some things that we don't need to wait for:

We don't need to wait to support one another.

We are a beautiful, thriving 'ohana and we can care for one another right now. Let's help one another prepare our hearts by checking in with each other. There will undoubtedly be some among us who will need extra support this Advent and perhaps we'll answer each other's prayers simply by reaching out.

We don't need to wait to give back. Whether it's through donating for White Gifts, volunteering at Serving Aloha, or turning in a stewardship card, all of us can find a way to get more involved and live into our vision – "to embody Christ daily."

We don't need to wait to pray. Pray, pray, pray! Pray for yourself, pray for your neighbor, pray for the person who cut you off in traffic. Pray for our church, for our staff, for our Council and lay leaders, pray for our new settled senior minister. Pray for the world! Let's blanket our Advent season in a thick layer of prayer!

We don't need to wait to reach out. Friends, I am so grateful for the care that has been shown to the staff in this time of transition, for the ways that you have expressed kindness and for the many offers of assistance. We are truly grateful. Please know, though, that if you need anything – prayer, someone to talk to, a visit, or help in any way – we are here. I am here. I am not too busy – I am never too busy. The greatest joy of being your minister is being able to walk through life with you. So please, all who have need, reach out! I am waiting to hear from you.

Friends, God will be with us in the waiting this Advent season. May your Advent be blessed with hope, peace, joy, and love.

Council Highlights

“For to us is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end.” (Isaiah 9:6-7, NIV)

Advent marks the first season of a new church year. It is the four Sundays preceding Christmas during which we prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ-Child. At Central Union Church, one of the ways we prepare is by lighting a different Advent candle on each of those four Sundays. We start with the candle of Hope, followed by the candle of Peace, the candle of Joy and the candle of Love until finally, on Christmas day, we welcome the Light of the World in the birth of Jesus. With the promise of God’s unconditional love made flesh, we have reason to be joyful and to share that joy with others. It is a wonderful way to start our church year and I pray the Light will radiate within you not only during the season of Advent but throughout the entire year, and that it will be reflected in your words and deeds for all to see.

Here are a few highlights from the Church Council:



More than 300 people attended **Pastor Brandon’s Aloha Farewell** luncheon in the Parish Hall. It was a wonderful turnout of Central Union members and staff who shared their aloha and deep appreciation for Pastor Brandon and his

family with music, food, dance, song, humor, gifts, a slide show, and many fond embraces. Pastor Brandon and his wife, Janelle, expressed how much they were touched by the event and how loved they felt. It was heartwarming and reaffirming to see our church ‘ohana come together in support of the Duráns.

The **Senior Minister Search Committee** is finalizing our church profile and expects to vet it with the Conference Minister for the Hawai‘i Conference very soon. Thereafter, it will be launched on United Church of Christ (UCC) platforms (to date, the SMSC has advertised only on non-UCC platforms).

Bridge Minister. Efforts to support Pastor Mary until the arrival of our next Senior Minister are ongoing. An essential element of such support will be the hiring of a minister to assist Pastor Mary in her clergy and pastoral duties. Per Pastor Mary’s request and our staff’s plan, we will wait until after Christmas to welcome a bridge minister. Positive discussions are underway with a likely candidate to be available at the beginning of January. In the meantime, please continue to do all you can to support Pastor Mary.

Should you have any questions or comments for the Council, please email them to us at council@centralunionchurch.org, and, as always, if you are interested in volunteering to serve on any of our church’s committees, ministries and community outreach efforts, please contact me via email at council-chair@centralunionchurch.org so you can be connected with a project that suits your interest. All are welcome!

Mahalo,
Carl Schlack
Council Chair



Meet our new staff members!



Melissa Thach
Youth Director

Melissa has a wide range of interests from Theology to Pop Culture, Music, Food and Gardening. She loves the ocean, art, and reading good books. She is passionate about social justice AND big soft

pretzels. She's mom to Bianca (7) and Xander (5), wife to Chris, and a mentor/academic coach at Sacred Hearts Academy. She's excited to join the Central Union 'ohana and talk story with you!



Christy Wada
Comptroller

Christy comes to us with over 15 years of accounting experience in diverse financial positions in both non-profit educational settings as well as for-profit entities. She is an extremely organized, self-driven and hard-working professional. She is also

a notary public. Christy is mom to two sons, who both attend MidPacific Institute. She is originally from the Big Island where her family runs Hirayama Farm in Waimea.

Please help us welcome Melissa and Christy to the Central Union 'ohana!

Nā Wai Chamber Choir

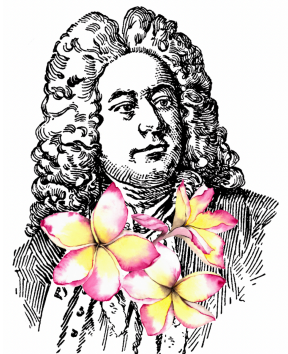
Margaret Lloyd, *Director of Music Ministries*
Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan, *Artistic Director*

This Fall, our Music Ministries department welcomed the Nā Wai Chamber Choir as the newest ensemble in residence at Central Union Church.



Nā Wai Chamber Choir is a vocal ensemble based in Hawai'i dedicated to the preservation, propagation, and innovation of Hawaiian choral music. Under Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan's direction, Nā Wai recorded a Global Music Award-winning album entitled Eō Lili'uokalani under the Mālama Music label and performed for the 2021 Chorus America Summer Conference, the 2021 National American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) Conference, and the 2020 ACDA Western Region Conference in Salt Lake. Since their inception, Nā Wai has commissioned and mentored emerging Native Hawaiian composers and conductors, toured throughout rural Hawaiian communities, and led workshops on the performance of Hawaiian choral music throughout the country.

A seasonal, auditioned vocal ensemble, members of the Nā Wai Chamber Choir are participating in our 73rd presentation of Handel's Messiah on Sunday evening, December 4th. This year, for the first time ever, we will premiere a critical edition of the entire Christmas portion of the work i ka 'Ōlelo Hawai'i with chamber orchestra, soloists, and choir. Additionally, Nā Wai will present a winter concert, 'Au i ke Kai me he Manu Ala: Cross the Sea as a Bird, in our Sanctuary on Sunday January 8th at 4:00 PM. We hope you will join us!



2022 Women's Retreat



Thirty-one lucky women participated in the **2022 CUC Women's Retreat** at Camp Mokule'ia over the first weekend of November. With the theme "Sabbath Sisters: a time to Rest and Recharge", our "unplanned retreat" was full of opportunities to refresh our spirits:

- time for visiting over a jigsaw puzzle
- a walk through the Dillingham Airfield
- painting river rocks
- early morning Bible reading, yoga
- walks on the beach
- massages
- lots of swimming, snorkeling, canoeing
- campfire and lots of singing
- labyrinth building and walking
- Pohnpeian singing during wonderful meals
- Sunday worship led by all women
- worship offering (\$497) given equally to UCC Transition House and Ho'ōla Nā Pua

New leadership is needed to continue the Women's Retreat in 2023. Contact Pastor Mary or Judy Miller (judy@mocean@gmail.com) if you're interested!



A close to full moon
tries to hide behind the haze
as it rises above
stripes of white and apricot clouds
that stretch over
a darkening ocean
which whispers secrets
of The Mystery
I have yet to decipher

I am ever engaged by the sea
that embraces every part of me
whose salinity
resembles all within my body

How can we doubt
The Creator's insistence on diversity
easily observed below on land and sea
and on high
in the often changing
patterns of sky?
I am in awe of color and geometry
above, below and in between
every shape and size of things!

Ironwoods sway gracefully
like hula dancers
with wind and waves as their musicians
All that surrounds, that is natural
helps us make space
to give God a chance
to get a word in edgewise

We come sans plan
(always fine with me)
but The One who is All
seems to have a plan that shows us
what we need to see
to be.

~Marion Lyman-Mersereau
November 2022

We Give Thanks!

Veronique Braithwaite, *Central Union Preschool Director*

As we head into the busy holiday season, we are reminded to pause, reflect, and think about all the wonderful blessings we are thankful for. Central Union Church Preschool had many things to be thankful for this month. Room 9 created posters to honor and show appreciation to our veterans and those who currently serve in the military. The posters were displayed at entrances of the Preschool campus.

Faculty, staff, and all the keiki showered Pastor Brandon with mahalo and aloha for all that he has shared these past 7 years with the Preschool. Children created handmade lei and cards to bless and present to Pastor Brandon during the most recent Preschool Chapel worship service.

We are reminded that in being thankful for our own blessings, we can share blessings with those in need as well. The preschool collected boxes of toiletry items that will be donated to Hale Kipa, a non-profit organization that serves to assist Hawai'i's youth in need. A gift of giving to those in need is a gift of adding generosity of spirit to your heart!



Adventures in Children's Ministry

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

November was a busy and exciting month for the Children's Ministry! Our artist, Ronny Lynn, completed an amazing mural for our room. With Ko'olau scenes, a banyan tree, wonders of the ocean, even children from our church, this beautiful mural, which was blessed and dedicated on November 9th, is a ministry for our children.

On November 16th, a small group of staff, volunteers, and Jenny Wallace, Godly Play trainer for Hawai'i, gathered to bless and dedicate our new Godly Play spaces and nursery, and to rededicate ourselves to ministering to our children in new and exciting ways.

On November 27th, we held our first Godly Play Sunday School in our new space. We look forward to reopening our nursery for the first time since March 2020 to serve our families with childcare for children birth to age 3 during our 9 & 11 AM Sunday worship services. Also on this first Sunday of Advent, Children's Ministry held its annual Advent Workshop in person for the first time since 2019! Between worship services, families gathered to create an Advent wreath and enjoy fellowship while ringing in the Advent season.



A big mahalo to Ronny Lynn, Church Council, our Diaconate, Women's League, Thrift Shop, Fanny Yeung & Veronica Cheung, the Gerell family, and Children's Ministry volunteers for ensuring the success of these projects!

Youth Director Updates

Kristen Young, *former Youth Director, current Communications Manager*

It's truly been an honor and a great blessing to work as Youth Director at Central Union Church since 2019. My absolute favorite times with the youth have been simply hanging out and learning about their lives. More important than lessons, programs, and activities, I personally believe one of the best things we, as a faith community, can do for our youth—whether or not they are part of our church—is to model Christ's extravagant welcome and radical love and let their faith grow. Employed or not, that is a job we all can take on! I look forward to supporting our new Youth Director, Melissa Thach!



Save Your Stamps!

Carol Miura, *Woman's Board of Missions for the Pacific Islands*

The Woman's Board Stamp Project continues! Your cancelled, and un-cancelled, U.S. and foreign stamps, and any stamp-collecting supplies, are needed. They will be shared with Stamps for the Wounded, a therapeutic program that supports recovering and rehabilitating military service personnel. Please leave your stamps (with generous paper borders) in the church office, to Carol Miura's attention.



Scholarships Available!

Central Union Church Women's League

The Women's League is happy to announce that we are now accepting applications from students for the [Kenneth O. and Doris A. Rewick Educational Aid Fund](#) and the [Ruth C. Scudder Scholarship](#) for the 2023-2024 academic year. Applications will be accepted through the ScholarsApp online platform only.

Visit scholarsapp.com to create an account and for additional information. Questions? Email cucwlscholarship@gmail.com. Application deadline: **February 28, 2023**.

Welcome, New Members!

FEBRUARY

Anne Palagyi
Zigmond "Zig" Palagyi
Corrie Miller
Matthew "Matt" Miller
Yosen Lam
Luke Lam

MARCH

Ga Eun Kim
Catherine "Kitty"
Yannone
Gerald Sarmiento
Mharie Sarmiento

JULY

Nikaela Lyon
Mariko Nakayama Kim

AUGUST

Scott Fernandez
Christine Lamborn

SEPTEMBER

Robyn Gerell

NOVEMBER

Sarah Nam
Gordon Liao
Cynthia Manaku
Edward Gaines
Maya Schlack
Emily Schlack
Pauli Tashima

White Gifts

It's the most wonderful time of the year – White Gifts time! Help us to support adults and youth who are houseless or in transition due to domestic violence, injustice, and/or circumstances beyond their control. While we won't be accepting wrapped gifts this year, you can partner with us by offering a monetary donation. Then, our savvy shoppers will purchase items requested by our local partner organizations who will help us distribute the gifts to the most vulnerable among us. **Donate before December 13 by cash, check, or online and be sure to indicate "White Gifts" on your donation!**



Be sure to join us on December 18th at the 9 AM service for our celebration and pageant in worship! All keiki are invited to check in for Sunday School and participate in the pageant – we'll have costumes ready for them. We look forward to this treasured tradition!

Poinsettias for Christmas



The Flower Committee will distribute poinsettias among our various worship spaces in time for Christmas! If you'd like to donate and dedicate a poinsettia, please submit the following information with a check made payable to "**CENTRAL UNION CHURCH**" with "**Poinsettias**" in the memo line. You may mail or bring checks to the church office by **Monday, December 19**, to be listed in the Christmas Eve and Day bulletins.

Poinsettias - \$10 each

Name (Donor): _____ Number of Plants: _____

☐ To the Glory of Christmas!

☐ In honor of _____

☐ In loving memory of _____