

A low-angle photograph of a rustic wooden cross against a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. Two long, purple cloths are draped over the horizontal arms of the cross, hanging down on either side. The cross is made of weathered, light-colored wood with visible knots and grain. The purple cloths appear to be made of a smooth, slightly shiny fabric.

The Spire

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

March 2023
Vol. 93 - No. 3



Our Season of Reflection & Discernment

Rev. Mary Herbig, Minister of Congregational Life and Care

Beloved of God,

It has been a very busy season here at Central Union Church! Over the past several weeks, we have been prayerfully discerning how God is calling us into the future. On Sunday, March 5, we will come together as one body to vote on the motion to authorize our elected Council to enter into long-term leaseholds or sales of portions of one or both of our campuses. You can read more about this in the coming pages.

In the midst of this conversation and important decision, I have seen the Holy Spirit at work in profound ways. I have seen us living into our mission of engaging and embracing all, as we have invited any and all to join in discussion, conversation, and prayer about this motion.

I have seen energy and engagement from countless members – both long-time and new. I have seen love for this church ‘ohana – and for God – poured out as each of us seek God’s vision for the future. I have heard calls to courage, trust, and unity, and I have seen grace both given and received. I am so proud of our church and its leaders and my heart is filled with joy because it is clear that God is at work here at Central Union.

Friends, we have entered into the sacred season of Lent – these 40 days of preparation and reflection as we anticipate Easter morning.

Lent is a time of looking inward – both individually and as a community – and reflecting on those habits, patterns, and attitudes that are not of God. It is a time for us to pause and notice the aspects of our lives or hearts that are getting in the way of our relationship with the Divine. We do this through focusing on our spiritual practices – through prayer, journaling, creating art, meditating, service, or something else. But the journey inward can be a perilous

one because we come face-to-face with those difficult and hardened parts of our hearts. Perhaps we will even be confronted by the “idols” that we treat as more important than God.

It is fitting that our season of reflection and discernment as a church comes during Lent. We, too, have had to face hard truths about ourselves. Yet we can take comfort in the truth that we are in this together, through the covenant that we have made with one another.



Colored by participants from our Lenten series

We also trust and know that God is right here with us – guiding us at each step of the journey. Even when we are afraid, God is faithful. The scriptures promise us that God will not let our feet slip. The Lord will keep us from all harm – God will watch over our communal life. The Lord will watch over our coming and going both now and forevermore.

Beloved church, as we continue this journey through the wilderness of discernment, let us do so trusting that God is guiding us in unity and faith. Amen.

Church Council Updates

Changes on the Church Council

Reem Bassous has stepped down as Council Secretary due to family circumstances. We will miss her voice on the Council and we thank her for her service.

The Council has appointed **Sarah Nam** to fill the Secretary position until the annual meeting in May, when the congregation will elect a new Secretary. Sarah and her husband, Gordon Liao, recently became members of Central Union Church and both were already actively engaged in the life of our Church. Sarah is a health technology professional who most recently served as the Head of Google Health Strategy at Google, as well as an Associate Partner at McKinsey and Company. She also previously served as a Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister's office in Ethiopia as part of the Tony Blair Africa Governance Initiative. Sarah holds an AB from Harvard College, an MBA from Harvard Business School, and an MPP from Harvard Kennedy School. We are very grateful for her willingness to serve on the Church Council!

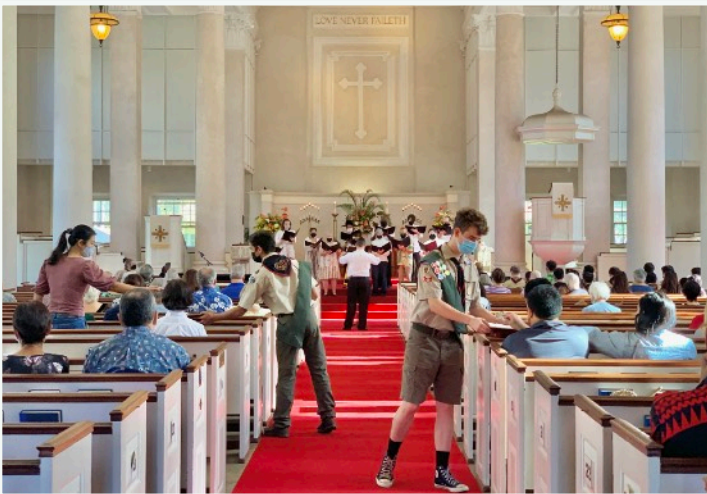


**MARCH
5**

Special Meeting of Members

The Church Council has called for a Special Meeting of the members of Central Union Church to be held on **Sunday, March 5, 2023, at 11 AM** in the Parish Hall (and Zoom) for the purpose of considering and voting on a Motion authorizing the Council to enter into long-term ground leases and/or sell portions of the Honolulu and/or Windward campuses.

Celebrating Our Partnership with Troop 777



Troop 777, of the Boy Scouts of America, has been chartered by Central Union Church since 2012. We are glad to be able to offer a place on our campus for these young scouts to meet and build character, grow in self-confidence, and develop skills to be leaders and good citizens of our community. Troop 777 has been a blessing to our church—volunteering in various events and activities, assisting with campus maintenance and restoration, and even generously sharing recent prize winnings with us! We are grateful for our partnership. On February 19, the tradition of Scout Sunday continued with Troop 777 scouts helping to greet, read, and collect the offering at the 9 AM worship service.

Keiki Corner

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Our Children's Ministry has been busy! On February 19, volunteers gathered for lunch and additional training in Godly Play. They learned about the different facilitator roles in the Godly Play classroom and learned how to welcome our children as Door People. The role of Door Person in the Godly Play classroom is vital to helping children feel welcome and to enable the Storyteller to engage wholeheartedly with the children during the story time. We are so grateful for our volunteers and their continued commitment to guiding our children as they grow in their faith.



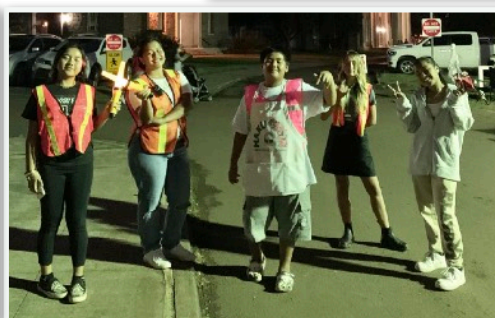
During Lent, our focus in the Godly Play room will be on the Faces of Easter. This series of stories focuses on the life of Jesus from his birth to his resurrection. Meanwhile, our Lenten Family Devotional focuses on building love in our families and communities. *Love Builds Up* is a 40-day challenge to grow as families and to share our love with our neighbors and community.

Our nursery is open! The Central Union Church nursery is open for children, birth to three years old, each Sunday during the 9 AM and 11 AM services. The Nursery features play time, a short Bible story, and space for little ones to rest!

Youth Fun-raiser

Melissa Thach, *Youth Director*

On February 3 & 4, the youth and an amazing group of volunteers from the church came together for our Punahou Parking fundraiser. We raised over \$12,000, had some fun, and (of course) got rained on! Special thanks to the many folks who came out to make the event such a success. The money raised will go toward our Kaua'i retreat & service project this July 21-23. The youth also recently had a fun day at Ice Palace!



CUPS Welcomes Assistant Director

Veronique Braithwaite, Preschool Director

Central Union Church Preschool is pleased to announce that Shelly Taira has been hired as Assistant Preschool Director! She joined Central Union Church as part of the Preschool Leadership and Admin team on February 21. Her warm presence, background, and experience in administrative leadership will be a welcome and supportive addition to our CUPS 'ohana. Please join us in welcoming Shelly to our CUPS program!



A message from Mrs. Shelly Taira:

Aloha Central Union Church & Preschool! My name is Mrs. Shelly Taira and I am so excited to be the new Assistant Preschool Director at CUPS. Here is a short introduction summary about me. I am married and have three children. As a family we enjoy the outdoors and being active. I have two Rottweilers, five chickens, and a bunch of tilapias in our aquaponics. I would love to have a goat someday! In my spare time I love cleaning and organizing. I also love gardening and I am striving to have a green thumb like my mother. I have been in the Early Childhood field for almost 25 years working as a teacher and serving in a directorship capacity. Caring for and educating young children has been my passion ever since I was in high school. I feel so blessed to have this wonderful opportunity to work here at CUPS. I really look forward to meeting and getting to know you and your children!

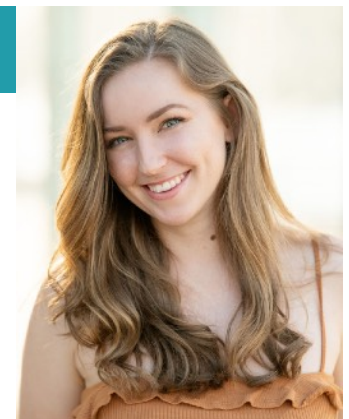
Welcome, Choral Scholar!

Margaret Lloyd, Director of Music Ministries

The Choral Scholars program of Central Union Church offers four college-age students the opportunity to support our choral ministry through involvement in our choral ensembles. For the Spring season (February-April), one of our Choral Scholars, Nadia Pagdilao, transitioned away from her responsibilities at CUC to focus on the final requirements for her undergraduate degree.



In celebration of Black History Month (February), special music selections in the 9 AM worship service honored the legacy, challenges and rich cultural history of Black and African American individuals and their significant contributions as expressed through the musical arts.



Kiara Miller
soprano
BM Student, Music
(Vocal Performance)

On February 23, we welcomed Kiara Miller as soprano Choral Scholar. Kiara is enrolled at UH Mānoa as a Bachelor of Music student. On Sunday, February 26, she joined continuing Choral Scholars Monique Luckett, alto; Charles Lonborg, tenor; and Thomas Goedecke, bass. They sang with our four Soloists Emily Vidler, soprano; Ezinne Dawson, alto; Keith Wallace, tenor; and Christopher Kelsey, bass, as the ensemble Ke Aloha Pau 'Ole in the 9 AM worship service. Kiara also serves as a section leader in the Chancel Choir. Please join our Music Ministries Department in welcoming Kiara!

Vision Team Update



Throughout the month of February, the Vision Team held six listening sessions (four at the Honolulu campus, one online via Zoom, one at the Windward campus), open to all, for the congregation to come together to ask questions and share feedback about the Vision Team's proposal that was presented following the January 29th Budget Meeting which painted a picture of the financial situation ahead.

As church members gathered to discern one possibility (a motion that church members will vote on come March 5) for Central Union's future, a mix of hope, excitement, fear, and differing opinions amongst us was revealed—all stemming from love for our church.

As we look to the future, let us be in prayer that we would honor our covenant with God and one another, that we would keep our mission of ~Engaging and Embracing ALL as we seek to Embody Christ~ at the forefront of our actions, that we would foster unity within our diverse church 'ohana.

Question:

Why are we in this dire financial situation?

Answer:

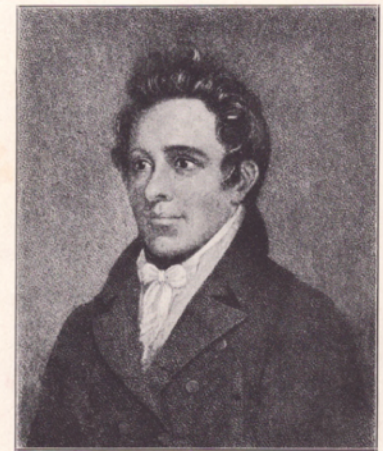
*There is no one simple explanation but we do know that this is happening with many churches across the nation. Studies show that people have been leaving their churches over the past few decades. In Hawai'i, studies also show that people are leaving the State in hopes of finding better economic opportunities or affordable retirement options on the mainland. Our own studies show that the pledging pool at Central Union Church is shrinking as well as other past sources of revenue. As our Church membership gets smaller, we cannot ask our members to make up the loss of revenue from those who have left the Church. **We need to find a new way** to supplement what our existing members do for our Church and relieve the financial strain of supporting this wonderful Church.*

The Vision Team has prepared a set of answers to various questions from the congregation regarding their proposal and the related motion being put forth by the Church Council for vote on March 5. The full Q&A document was emailed to members; hard copies can be requested via the church office.

How the Gospel Came to Hawai‘i

On February 19, we observed Henry ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia Sunday in honor of the young Hawaiian credited with bringing the Gospel to Hawai‘i.

In the year 1808, a sixteen-year-old Hawaiian lad leaped into the sea from a rocky shore off the island of Hawai‘i, swam to an American ship anchored in Kealahou Bay, and begged the Master, Captain Brintnal of New Haven, Connecticut, to take him to America. His name was ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia. Orphaned in one of the frequent tribal wars, he had been adopted by an uncle, a kahuna (native priest), to be trained for the pagan priesthood. But the terrifying experiences which he had undergone in seeing his parents, a younger brother, and an aunt, slaughtered in his presence, made him resolve to leave his native land, and so he escaped from his uncle’s custody.



Henry Opukahaia, who inspired the first American Board Mission to Hawaii.

Captain Brintnal already had one Hawaiian cabin boy, Hopu, but could use another likely lad, and succeeded in persuading the uncle to let the boy go with him to the ship’s home port, New York. During the long voyage, via China, ‘Ōpūkaha‘ia learned some English that convinced Captain Brintnal to take him to New Haven...

To learn more, visit the CUC Archives on the 2nd floor of the Family Life Center, or email our Historian (historian@centralunionchurch.org), Karl Hedberg, to receive the complete article.

Campus Tours

On the fourth Thursday of each month, historical tours, led by former archivist/historian Rosemary Eberhardt, are offered to church members and visitors. On a recent tour, Kamehameha Schools alumni viewed the Big Bible in the Church History Room Museum which was bound by Kamehameha students to commemorate the debut of the Revised Standard Version of the Bible in 1952.

For reservations, contact events@centralunionchurch.org.



2023 LENTEN SERIES



Taste and See:
Cultivating Attentiveness
with Our Senses

MEAL + DISCUSSION
+ WAYS TO CULTIVATE
ATTENTIVENESS TO GOD

Wednesdays • March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 • 6:30-8:00 PM

We began the season of Lent with an Ash Wednesday service on February 22. A week later, on March 1, we kicked off our Lenten series reflecting on how our sense of touch helps us to experience God. The series will continue on Wednesday evenings through March (6:30-8:00 PM in the Women's Building). Join us as we use the gifts of our senses to encounter the Divine.

Remembering Our Saints

Please hold the following families in your prayers during this time of mourning:

The family of **Rev. Elden Buck**, who died on February 13, 2023. Services are being planned for March 26, 2023, in the Sanctuary.

The family of **Susan Victor**, who died on February 24, 2023. Services are pending.

The family of **Lawrence "Cully" Judd III**, who died on February 25, 2023. Services are pending.



Easter Flowers



The Flower Committee will distribute flowers among our various worship spaces for Easter on April 9! If you'd like to donate and dedicate a plant, please submit the following information with a check made payable to "**CENTRAL UNION CHURCH**" with "**Easter flowers**" in the memo line. You may mail or bring checks to the church office by **Sunday, April 2**, to be listed in the Easter Sunday bulletins.

Easter Flowers - \$10 each

Please print legibly.

Name (Donor): _____ Number of Plants: _____

☐ To the Glory of Easter!

☐ In honor of _____

☐ In loving memory of _____