

The Spire

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

April 2023

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The Grief and Joy of Holy Week

Rev. Mary Herbig, Minister of Congregational Life and Care

Beloved church,

I pray that your Holy Week has been a blessed one.

This is perhaps the most sacred week for people of the Christian faith as we

celebrate the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry—and his life. Every Holy Week, I do my best to immerse myself in the stories of this week from our gospels and every year, something different stands out to me. What I've noticed this year is the array of emotions that are felt and expressed. There's excitement, joy, expectation, anticipation, gratitude, hope, anger, grief, shame, sorrow, guilt, confusion, doubt, curiosity, fear, shock.

Of all these emotions, though, grief and joy are the most profound. During Holy Week, grief and joy are palpably mingled together.

I've had an opportunity to talk with many of you since our March 5th congregational meeting where we voted to authorize our Council to develop portions of our campuses. Some I've spoken to remain strongly opposed, some are strongly in favor, and others are somewhere in the middle. Clearly, we are a church where there is palpable grief and joy mingled together right now.

Fortunately, we are called into community so that we can process and unpack what we've felt together. I can't help but remember that even after Christ was resurrected, the disciples continued to lock themselves away together. They needed time and space together to talk about

what happened, to process all they had experienced. We too need one another so that we can listen and support each other as we grapple with all that we have experienced. This is a critical part of transformation and growth and I feel so blessed and grateful to be a part of this 'ohana. Here, we are free to express our hearts and to work through challenging experiences and emotions together.

Church, as we move through this Holy Week and experience the death of Jesus together, let us keep our eyes fixed on Sunday - on the resurrection hope that comes with Easter. Because in the empty tomb, we find the great truth of our faith – that God is

faithful and that love wins. On

that Easter morning, the disciples' lives changed forever – everything that they knew faded in the brilliant light of new life. They needed to talk it out together – and then, they needed to invest their whole selves even more. They needed to get to work!

In the coming weeks, we will have new opportunities for you to invest yourself in exciting ways. Two areas with great potential at Central Union are the areas of faith formation and the welcoming of visitors and new members. Please watch for more information about how you can invest your heart there!

Friends, I pray that this Holy Week would be a sacred time for you, that you would allow all your emotions to surface, welcoming them with compassion. And above all, may we remember that through it all, God is faithful and love never faileth.





Believing in What We Have Not Yet Seen

Carl Schlack, Council Chair

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.
—*Hebrews 11:1*

Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” —*John 20:29*

I have long felt that the words Jesus directed to Doubting Thomas after the resurrection were also directed to me—and to all of us in this modern world who must see something to believe it. I have thought, “Wouldn’t it be so much easier to believe in the resurrection of Jesus if I had been there with Jesus before the crucifixion and after the resurrection—to have seen Him alive again who died on the cross?” Yet even Thomas, who was there before and after, would still not believe upon seeing the risen Christ until he placed his fingers where the nail marks were in Jesus’ hands and where the spear had pierced Jesus’ side. Such is the skeptical nature of people which is why we have the expression “seeing is believing” to explain why someone who has witnessed an unlikely occurrence will no longer disbelieve what they have seen.

Jesus knew it would be difficult for future generations to believe an event as miraculous as the resurrection (and perhaps other events of His ministry as well), so he counseled us about the importance of learning, through faith, to believe in things we have not seen. That, in itself, is an act of faith for which Jesus calls us blessed.

And now that Easter Sunday is upon us, let us pray that the spirit of Easter and the reawakening of hope, of renewal and of new life that it represents, does not end on Easter Sunday but continues all year long. Let us strive always to be Easter people—people of faith who believe in things we have not yet seen, and people who aspire toward things not yet in existence.



On March 5, 2023, our Central Union Church congregation peered into the future and took a leap of faith. To address our mounting challenges (i.e., a shrinking congregation, a challenging stewardship environment, mounting deferred maintenance costs and an increasing reliance on income streams outside of congregational control), the congregation opted to be proactive and voted to grant the Church Council the authority to enter into long-term ground leases and/or to sell portions of the Honolulu and Windward campuses so that underutilized portions of our real estate assets could be used to further the mission of Central Union Church. It was a bold vote, reminiscent of many bold actions taken by our Church throughout its long history, and it was consistent with our Church’s commitment to develop the financial resources needed to continue ministering to the spiritual needs of the congregation while simultaneously doing God’s work in our community.

News from the Council Meeting held on March 23, 2023:

Children and Youth Ministries: The Council received the good news that the Children and Youth Ministries are becoming increasingly active. Read more in the next pages! Coming up: family camp, continuation of Compassion Camp, a confirmation retreat in the fall.

Central Union Preschool: Preschool Director, Veronique Braithwaite, reported that preparations for the Preschool's "Dazzle" fundraiser are in full swing. **Dazzle 2023** will be held at our Honolulu campus on Friday, April 28, and all are invited to purchase a ticket to attend and support our wonderful Preschool! Purchase tickets online: bit.ly/Dazzle2023

Senior Minister Search Committee (SMSC): Don Clifford, chairperson of the SMSC, reported that the SMSC has made substantial progress and has identified 7 top candidates. The SMSC intends to complete interviews with all 7 very soon, then rank the candidates and conduct further interviews with the top 2 or 3.

Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee (PPRC): Nathan Wong, chairperson of the PPRC, reported on the challenges PPRC has faced in trying to fill the vacant Comptroller position and the Executive Operations Officer position. For now, PPRC has decided to focus its efforts on filling the Comptroller position.

Green Team: Martha Balkin reminded the Council about an ad hoc committee called the "Green Team" that was started in 2008 and was active until 2014. It focused on energy saving issues such as the installation of photovoltaic panels, and retrofitting the lights, and it also worked on LEED certification. Martha shared about recent interest in re-activation of the Green Team as a necessary precursor for CUC to apply to be a "creation justice" church (a process of discernment about how we can best care for God's creation). The Council supported the "creation justice" initiative and authorized Martha to follow up with former Green Team members.

Pastors' Report: In addition to their work preparing for Holy Week, Pastor Mary and Pastor Dave shared that they also have been working to build a post-pandemic ministry model for CUC that will be resistant to clergy and staff transitions. Given all the time and energy expended recently on addressing our Church's financial deficits, it is felt even greater efforts are required to address our ministry deficits. Pastor Mary and Pastor Dave are formulating plans for the revitalization of certain ministry areas, with the "Faith Formation" and "Welcome and Connecting" ministries being foremost among them. They are also working on a "Step Up, Step Out" campaign that will invite the congregation to build upon the momentum created during the Vision Team's many informational sessions with the congregation.

Nominations and Governance Committee (NGC): Carol Egan, chairperson of the NGC, presented the following slate of candidates recommended by the NGC for Council approval: Secretary (2 year term), Sarah Nam; three "At Large" Council members (3 year terms) for the Class of 2026, Jane Fyrberg, Maurina Ludwig and Carol Egan; and one "At Large" Council member (1 year term) for the Class of 2024, Melveen Chun. The Council unanimously approved the candidates nominated by the NGC and directed that the congregation be notified of the nominations.

Endowment Funds: The Council approved a recommendation by Treasurer, David Yee, to remove as many of the endowment fund restrictions as possible, and to have the Investments Committee explore whether CUC's endowment funds are being appropriately managed to maximize returns within acceptable tolerance ranges.

As always, we encourage church members to become more involved in the life of our church, so if you are interested in volunteering and contributing to the good work of Central Union Church, please contact me at council-chair@centralunionchurch.org and I will work to match you with a project that fits your interest.

Mahalo,
Carl Schlack, *Council Chair*

Concerts & Choral Festivals!

Margaret Lloyd, *Director of Music Ministries*

In the month of March 2023, Central Union Church hosted six concerts and four one-day choral festivals. All were affiliated with organizations with whom our Music Ministries department has worked over the years. The musical performances were infused with youthful exuberance and creative talent!



March 4: ACDA-HI Nā Leo Hou

The American Choral Directors Association Hawai'i Chapter holds an annual adjudicated choral festival for high school students. This year's event included

312 students from 12 schools in our Islands, including three from neighbor islands. Clinician: Dr. Nicholle Andrews, University of Redlands.

March 9: Hakuoh University Handbell Choir Farewell Concert

This internationally recognized ensemble from Japan, founded by Director Hirotaka Arai in 1988,

celebrated their 35th anniversary and 29th Goodwill Tour of Hawai'i this Spring. The 15-member choir rings seven octaves of Malmark handbells and chimes. Since 2008, Hakuoh University has collaborated with the UH Community Colleges and the annual handbell choir tour to Hawai'i has often included a concert at CUC.



March 19: 18th Annual AGO Organ Recital

Since 2006, the American Guild of Organists Hawai'i Chapter has offered an annual recital featuring a "rising star" as a gift to the community. This year's artist was Dr. Caroline

Robinson, Organist and Associate Choirmaster at the Cathedral of St. Philip in Atlanta. She is represented by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.

March 24: Choirs of America Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i (aka Aloha State Choral Festival)

The first of two adjudicated choral festivals by Choirs of America included 237 high school students in six choirs from AZ, CA, OR, TN and WI; a 17-member instrumental ensemble from WI; and a featured performance by Riverside City College Vocal Ensemble. Festival Director: Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan, Arizona State University and Artistic Director, CUC.



March 27: Pacific Basin Music Festival

This 38th annual five-day choral and instrumental event on O'ahu included an adjudicated choral festival at CUC organized by World Projects. Two choirs

from CA and HI participated and the choral faculty included Dr. Jace Saplan and Dr. Alec Schumacker.

March 31: Choirs of America Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i

Choirs of America returned for a second all-day choral festival that included 285 high school students and 60 middle school students in six choirs from AL, CA and NV. This event also included hula immersion, taught by kumu hula Lauren Kanoelani Chang Williams.



An Egg-citing Month for CUPS!

Shelly Taira, *Assistant Preschool Director*



The month of March was busy with fun-filled events for Central Union Church Preschool. We started off the month by celebrating Dr. Seuss' Birthday and National Read Across America Day, which aims to promote the importance and benefits of reading aloud to our young children. Keiki wore pajamas, ate green eggs and ham, and listened to stories read by some special visitors.

Thank you to our Room 10 and Pink Cottage students for hosting our monthly Chapel worship. They shared the Bible story of God's Creation and Jonah and the Whale.



Everyone had an egg-cellent time!

We ended the month with our annual Spring Event which was sponsored by Central Union Church Preschool Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). The children enjoyed an array of activities from visiting the petting zoo, to hunting for Easter eggs and singing and dancing with the Easter Bunny.



Keiki Corner

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

On March 5, we officially reopened our second Sunday school class. With such a wonderful growth in attendance, we needed to open our second Godly Play room. We now hold Godly Play in two classrooms: Godly Play 1 for ages 3-7 and Godly Play 2 for ages 7-11.



We were also able to fill a vacant position in our nursery. Please join us in welcoming Dacy Amond who joins her sister, Darla, on our nursery staff!

On March 27, our Children's Ministry families gathered at Ala Moana Beach Park for a great day of sun and surf!

Our first beach day in more than three years was a success with lots of swimming, sandcastle building, picnic lunch, and fun with friends. We will be adding more beach day get-togethers to our calendar very soon, stay tuned!

Godly Play Update

Robyn Gerell, *Children's Ministry*

We kicked off this beautiful faith formation program on the first Sunday of Advent. Our storytellers shared the precious stories—about the prophets, the Holy Family, the Shepherds, and the Magi—surrounding the birth of Jesus in a new way. The experience for our children has been wonderful!



In the New Year, we explored our Green and Growing Days between the Christmas season and Lent through a series of parables told by Jesus. We began with the parable of The Sower (Matthew 13:1-9), The Good Shepherd (Matthew 18:12-14, Luke 15:1-7, John 10, Psalm 23), and the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-35), followed by lesser known parables about The Leaven (Matthew 13:33, Luke 13:20-21), The Mustard Seed (Matthew 24:32, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19), The Greatest Pearl (Matthew 13:45). These simple stories help our keiki to hear the teachings of Jesus and apply those teachings in their own lives!

As we travel our Lenten journey toward Easter, we are now exploring the greatest story ever told—the story of Jesus. We started at the very beginning when a baby was born. We have traveled the familiar stories of Jesus' life, death, and life once again. Throughout these weeks of Godly Play, we have gone from Bethlehem to Calvary, through the Gospels as shared by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Sunday school with Godly Play is amazing! We're learning in the same way that Jesus taught, through the power of story, reflection, feast, and blessing.



Youth Updates

Melissa Thach, *Youth Director*

On Sunday mornings in March the youth continued our journey through 'The Chosen' (season 1). Each week we shared our thoughts on the story presented in the episode, ate some food, and made plans for the future. Over Spring Break, a group of eight youth came to volunteer at Serving Aloha and then went to the movies together. At the end of the month, we sang "Jubilee" with the worship team in the 11 AM service.

We are looking forward to many more service opportunities including a trip to the lo'i and the Walk for Water to Shut Down Red Hill this month, and our upcoming trip to Kaua'i this July. If you are interested in supporting the youth, you can sponsor our walk (\$20/person) or volunteer to drive for our next event!



Masking Update

Dr. Nathan Wong,
Reopening Liaison Team

When we reopened for in-person worship service in October 2020, we did so with physical distancing and masking as our primary mitigation measures against the spread of COVID-19. In the nearly two and a half years since, we have been gratified by having not triggered a single spreader event at CUC; many thanks to our congregation. At the end of March, we moved to optional masking on campus. We urge you to take into account your own health status and susceptibility, as well as those close to you, as you make your health choices, such as opting for a vaccine or medication. Masking does remain a reasonable individual measure to minimize the spread of any respiratory illness.

Celebrate Easter!

Easter

SUNDAY

APRIL 9, 2023

Christ is risen!

Alleluia!

CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

Honolulu Campus

- 7 AM Worship - Chapel
- 9 AM Worship - Sanctuary
- 10 AM 'Ohana Easter Egg Hunt
- 11 AM Worship - Parish Hall
- 11 AM Worship - Chapel (Pohnpei Ministry)

Windward Campus

- 10 AM Worship - Sanctuary

Online

- 10 AM Worship

centralunionchurch.org

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