



The Spire

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

July 2023

Vol. 93 - No. 7



Pastor's Page • Laughing with Sarah

Rev. Mary Herbig, Associate Minister and Acting Head of Staff

Friends, in this season after Pentecost, our scripture calendar has been working its way through the story of our faith ancestor, Abraham. It's

been so much fun for us to retell some of those beloved stories and glean what new lessons they have for us in this season of transition. My favorite part of Abraham's story involves three visitors coming to stay with Sarah and Abraham. While Abraham and Sarah were relaxing in their camp, three strangers arrived. They shared a meal and suddenly, one of these visitors began to speak words of grace to Abraham, reaffirming the promise that, despite their advanced years, Sarah and Abraham would soon have a child.

While we aren't told how Abraham reacted, we do hear Sarah's response. Hidden out of sight, Sarah began to laugh. Perhaps hers was a laughter of joy or maybe disbelief or even scorn. We just don't know - but what we do know is that shortly after, Sarah became pregnant, just as the visitor (angel?) said. What utter joy and shock they must have felt!

As I shared in our sermon, I think it's easy for us as readers to think, "Woohoo!" and move on to the next part of the story, as our scriptures do. I can't help but think, though, about what that time of preparation looked like for 90-year-old Sarah and 100-year-old Abraham. Imagine their work as they tried to prepare their tent for a new little one. Imagine Sarah's pregnancy and the stress on her body. Think of her trying to keep up with a toddler! It must have been chaotic and stressful and wonderful all at once. I think there is a critical lesson in this for us: when God showed up in Sarah and Abraham's lives in new and exciting ways, the result was more work for them, not less. It meant more time, more physical and emotional energy, just much more work. The same is true for us.

Friends, like Sarah, Central Union is expecting! Not a baby, but a new Senior Minister. After much discernment and prayer, we voted to call Pastor Rushan Sinnaduray to lead us in ministry and

now, we are anxiously awaiting his arrival. As we wait, it'll be so easy for us to fall into the trap of thinking that our work is done! That we can finally take a breath and rest as we wait. We might believe that when Pastor Rushan arrives, we can finally hand over the hard work that we've been doing in this transition!

But friends, like Sarah, we have a LOT of work yet to do. In fact, I'm convinced that it's even more than before! Just as Sarah prepared for a new baby, we need to do some spring cleaning. We need to make space, too. But ours isn't physical space – it's mental and emotional and spiritual space for Pastor Rushan and his 'ohana. These months prior to Pastor Rushan's arrival are the

perfect time for us to pause and take stock of some of the habits, both healthy and unhealthy, that we have developed as a body. If we want to give Pastor Rushan's ministry space to thrive, it is our kuleana to become the healthiest we can be. We need to engage in sacred conversation together about our strengths and weaknesses, our hopes and expectations. We need to listen deeply to one another and take seriously what we hear about where we have shined God's light, and also where we have fallen short, or even caused harm. When we listen, we learn where we need to grow in spiritual and emotional maturity, for the good of the whole.

Friends, now is the time for us to intentionally work together to reflect on and reset our communal life. Now is the time for us to address the tangles in our communication. Now is the time for us to pray together that we might reaffirm that which is thriving and healthy, and commit to changing that which is not. In this season of waiting, we have the opportunity, to loosen our grip so that God can use Pastor Rushan to surprise us with new ways of finding meaning. I pray that you will join me on the journey.

Praise God, for God has given us cause for joy! Let us laugh with Sarah as we do the good work of preparation. Amen.





Our Council Chair Shares

Carl Schlack, Church Council Chair

Aloha Central Union Church

Can you believe that 2023 is half over? Weren't we just discussing the annual budget, preparing for Lent, and looking ahead to Easter? Why does it seem the first six months passed with alarming alacrity? Perhaps it is as the psychologists say – the busier you are during a time interval, the faster that time interval will feel like it passed. And we have been a very busy church.

In less than six months, we already had four meetings of the Members of Central Union Church plus a dozen or so informational meetings on various topics. As a result of those meetings, we passed an abbreviated annual budget (to align our Church year with the Preschool year), approved a bold plan to utilize a portion of our real estate assets to help secure the financial future of the Church, amended our Bylaws and elected new Council Members, and voted to call a new Senior Minister.

However, as busy as the first half of the year has been, the second half looks to be equally busy:

- At the end of July, the Council will hold a retreat to reassess current needs of the Church and then to discuss and prioritize projects to address those needs during the remainder of the Church year (i.e., until the next Annual Meeting of the Members of CUC in 2024). Each project will then be assigned a specific Council Member who will be responsible for working on and completing that project.
- Due to our abbreviated annual budget for 2023 (which ends on July 31, 2023), our Treasurer, David Yee; Comptroller, Angie Barboza; and select Council Members will be busy preparing the budget for the new fiscal year that runs from August 1, 2023, to July 31, 2024. Once the budget has been completed and approved by the full Council, it will be submitted to CUC Members for final approval at our next Annual Budget Meeting which, per the recent change to our Bylaws this past May, will be held before the end of August 2023.
- The Real Estate Committee is continuing to explore development options and consider development partners that will allow CUC to achieve its dual objectives of (i) creating a revenue source that will pay the cost of day-to-day Church operations and work on deferred maintenance projects, and (ii) allow Member pledges and other contributions to be used to broaden and strengthen CUC's ministry and community outreach endeavors. You will hear more from the Real Estate Committee in the months ahead including a status report to CUC Members before the end of the year.
- And, of course, a great deal of work is underway to prepare for the arrival of our new Senior Minister, The Reverend Rushan Sinnaduray, and his family who will be joining us in early September. They will be moving into the Manse upon arrival but since their belongings won't arrive until weeks later, accommodations need to be made to supplement the Manse's existing furnishings (e.g., temporary beds are needed for the two Sinnaduray children) so they can live there until their household goods arrive. During the first couple weeks of September, it is anticipated that Pastor Rushan will be meeting with various people at CUC and getting settled into his office at the Church, but also taking time to move his family into the Manse and enroll his children in school. His first Sunday in the pulpit will likely be the last Sunday in September. As it will be an adjustment for Pastor Rushan and his family, please give some thought to how you can welcome them to CUC and support them in their transition.

As you can see, while much has been accomplished in the first half of 2023, much remains to be done. But I am confident we will accomplish just as much during the second half of 2023 because of the many people who unselfishly put their minds, their hearts, and their hands to work for CUC. I am reminded of Psalm 90:17 that says, *"May the favor of the Lord our God rest on us; establish the work of our hands for us – yes, establish the work of our hands."*

Mahalo,
Carl Schlack

Welcoming New & Familiar Staff



CUC welcomes back Cassie Chee!

We are excited to have Cassie Chee with us once again! Cassie was our pastoral intern in the summer of 2020. She has since graduated with her Master's of Divinity from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and has worked as a community organizer on O'ahu through various faith-based and advocacy organizations. We are grateful to welcome her back for the next couple of months in the role of Temporary Director of Faith Formation. She will be assisting in worship and getting our Faith Formation ministry reignited. You can reach her at cassie-chee@centralunionchurch.org.



Sing praises to God!

Margaret Lloyd, *Director of Music Ministries*

The CUC Music Ministries department is excited to welcome Sarah Young as Director of Choirs effective August 1, 2023. She currently serves as Music Director at St. John Vianney School in Kailua. As an educator, she prepares music for school masses; directs performances for Band, Orchestra, Drama & Choir; and develops/teaches general music curriculum.

Sarah holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education (Minor in General Education/Minor in General Communications) from the University of Miami, Frost School of Music. As an Executive Board Member of national music organizations, she volunteered most recently with the American Choral Directors Association—Hawai'i Chapter, helping to develop COVID-19 mitigation strategies for local choir directors; presenting at various regional conferences and workshops; and serving as Secretary.

An active solo and collaborative musician, Sarah has been engaged in the community as a guest conductor, featured soloist, choral section leader, and choral ensemble member. She performs with Early Music Hawai'i and Nā Wai Chamber Choir, now in residence at CUC. In the Fall of 2019, she assisted with *Messiah* rehearsals as guest conductor and also served as Soprano section leader.

Sarah's responsibilities at CUC will include working with singers in the Chancel Choir, Ke Aloha Pau 'Ole, and the Soloist Ensemble as well as partnering with our Artistic Director, Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplán, in chorus preparation for choral concert presentations by The Hawai'i Nui Chorale.

Thank you for your ongoing support and prayers for the ministry of music at Central Union Church as together "We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to embody Christ!"

"Sing praises to God, sing praises...." ~Psalm 47:1 (NIV)

Go Green!

Carolynn Bell-Tuttle, Green Team

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it!” –Wendell Barry, novelist

On June 24, Central Union Church (CUC) hosted its 11th annual e-waste collection event! Once again, we partnered with Growing Green Community Recycling Clean-Up Program and the Lions Club. Together this group of volunteers unloaded cars of old computers, cell phones, iPads, televisions, and other electronic items to be safely and securely recycled. The collected e-waste will be shipped to California and usable parts will be recycled and repurposed into new products. Keeping old e-waste out of our landfills keeps them out of our water sources which is important to keeping our aquifer safe to drink, now and into the future. Mahalo to all who recycled their e-waste! Mark your calendars for next year's event on June 22, 2024.

GET INVOLVED! CUC's Green Team is looking for new members who are interested in continuing our mission to *“live wisely within God's creation through conservation and compassion, giving back to the earth what we take from the earth, now and in the future.”*



A Gift of Prayer

Each week at our Serving Aloha food distribution, a volunteer will hand out a slip of paper with a short prayer on it. Getting these prayers out has been a team effort. They are selected and typed up, printed, cut into strips, and offered to anyone who'd like one.



One Wednesday, a Serving Aloha attendee who had been coming to the food distribution for over a year brought a rolling briefcase filled with binders of prayers that she had collected over decades. This person was Ruth Freedman who has a history of healing as a registered nurse and harpist. Of the Jewish faith tradition, Ruth began collecting these prayers when she was in college. She collected any prayers that spoke to her and were universal in nature so “anyone and everyone could pray.”



Upon being first received by our Serving Aloha volunteer Laura St. Denis who hands out the prayer slips, the collection of prayers was then brought to Evie Hao to support her weekly contribution of preparing the prayers. The next Wednesday, Evie shared, “Ruth gifted us two thick volumes of prayers, poems, and thoughts by thinkers throughout the centuries. This week's prayer is from the approximately 800+ collection.”

Through Serving Aloha, which has been a vibrant ministry of giving, we have received such a special gift in these prayers! Ruth shared her collection saying, “It would have a better home than in my closet.” You can check out this one-of-a-kind collection in the church office.

Working Together to Beautify Our Campus

Building and Grounds Committee

Your Building and Grounds Committee Has Been Hard at Work!

In our ongoing efforts to continually improve the buildings and grounds on both Central Union Church campuses, your committee completed a couple quick but very noticeable projects to improve the curb appeal of the church for over 8,780 cars that pass by Central Union daily.

In May, the Punahou Street sign was completed. Both signs have the same message, are brightly lit by LED lighting (on a timer), weather sealed, covered by 1/4" outdoor acrylic, and are painted with heavy duty metallic paint. Now, both restored signs let the community know, both day and night, that Central Union Church is open for God's business.

In the latter part of May, committee members Sam Failla, Miguel Asuncion, Scott Ballentyne, David Yee and Alan Hirota worked hard to repair and rebuild 38 of the 52 parking barricades.

Scott and Sam contacted Troop Master Ed Chin with the CUC-sponsored Boy Scout Troop 777 to see if the troop would be able, as a church/community project, to paint all 52 repaired and rebuilt parking barricades. The troop scheduled June 10 to have this project completed. There were over 25 scouts and leaders in attendance. The barricades had two to three coats of exterior white paint applied and they look great and ready to go for another few years.



The Building and Grounds Committee and Central Union Church extend our deep mahalo to Troop 777 for a job well done!

CUPS Storytime Summer Adventures

Shelly Taira, Assistant Preschool Director

Central Union Church Preschool is wrapping up its five-week summer program. This year's theme was "Storytime Summer"! The children spent the past few weeks exploring literature that inspires imagination and creativity and building cognitive and critical thinking skills. They were engaged in learning-filled, explorative activities through hands-on learning that incorporated science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. They also had an opportunity to learn more about God through different Bible stories during Godly Play Bible story time with Mrs. Herrera. The keiki were treated to a visit from the Kona Shave Ice truck and enjoyed water play days. The Preschool continues to plan and prepare for the upcoming 2023-2024 school year, scheduled to start in the middle of August.



Keiki Corner

Cayanna Herrera, Director of Children's Ministries



After more than three years, CUC's Toddler Playgroup reopened on July 6th. This exciting come-and-go playgroup was a staple of our Children's Ministry prior to March 2020 and now it's back! Every Tuesday and Thursday from 10

AM to 1 PM, we welcome families with children from birth to age 5 to grow friendships and play together. For more information, contact cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org.

CUC Youth

Melissa Thach, Youth Director

Our youth have had a standing appointment to help at Serving Aloha over the summer. Their hours spent volunteering also count toward their 20 service hours needed to attend the youth trip to Kaua'i later this month. Please keep the youth and chaperones in your prayers as they deepen relationships with one another and God on their first off-island trip since the summer of 2019!





Wider Church News



The 34th [General Synod](#) of our denomination, the United Church of Christ (UCC), was held from June 30 through July 4 in Indianapolis with the theme “Making All Things New” (Isaiah 43:18-19). Delegates passed a variety of Resolutions of Witness and made history by electing the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson who will be the first woman to be the General Minister and President of the UCC! Familiar folks also elected to new positions were Gregory Sato (our Church Council Vice Chair) as UCC board member to the class of 2029; and Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray (our incoming Senior Minister) as the General Synod Moderator for 2025.

Save the Date and Come!

The Women’s League of Central Union Church invites ALL to a Scholarship Awardee Reception on Sunday, July 30, 2023, at 10 AM at the Women’s Building on the Honolulu campus to honor this year’s chosen recipients of the Kenneth and Doris Rewick Educational Fund, and the Ruth C. Scudder Scholarship Fund. It will be a blessed time for scholarship recipients to know the fellowship and ‘ohana of Central Union Church that has made their grants and scholarships possible, and for us, as a congregation, to greet and congratulate these individuals who have demonstrated their outstanding character, scholarship, and community service over the years. Please stop by to say hello, shake some hands, and enjoy refreshments!

Calling All Women!



Are you interested in making sure the Women’s Retreat happens this year?

We are evaluating our options! Volunteers are needed. Please call or text Judy Miller at 808-395-9988 if you’d like to get involved in this fun tradition that brings together women of CUC!

Remembering Our Saints

Please hold the family of **Donald C. Huff**, who died on May 31, 2023, in your prayers. Service plans are unknown at this time.

Please, also pray for the family of **Craig Shimizu**, who died on June 26, 2023. Services were held on Thursday, July 13th, at Valley of the Temples, Trousdale Chapel, Kaneohe. Inurnment is set for 10 AM on Monday, the 17th, at the Hawai’i State Veterans Cemetery.

Please also remember the family of **Karen Swofford**, who died on July 7, 2023, in your prayers. Services are pending.

