

# *The Spire*



Central Union Church and Preschool

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

November 2023

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# GRATITUDE



## Pastor's Page: The Practice of Giving Thanks

“Give thanks in all circumstances;  
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:18

**Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray, Senior Minister**

Here we are again in the season of gratitude. It is at this time of year that we have to wonder how to stay optimistic in the face of life's challenges. How do we remain grateful amidst the uncertainty of living with the high cost of living, the unstable political climate around the world and the conflict in the Middle East? How does your faith resource you to remain optimistic and grateful in the face of uncertainty, suffering and injustice?

The thing with gratitude is that it puts the bad days in perspective. What are they bad compared to? Are they bad compared to other days you've had or are they bad compared to other people's bad days?

Gratitude celebrates what is. Life keeps moving. No feeling lasts forever. While circumstances can feel harsh and unending, gratitude finds new ways to express itself. Gratitude or giving thanks or saying thank you is a spiritual discipline that is important to integrate into our lives. G.K. Chesterton once said that we need to get in the habit of “taking things with gratitude, not taking things for

granted.” He captured the essence of the argument with this one phrase. When we take things for granted, we do not feel gratitude, we are not grateful. When we are grateful, nothing is taken for granted. Not our health. Not our ability to see or hear or taste, should we be able to do some of those things. Not the fact that we have shelter, that we are loved and that we love, that we have food in our bellies.



A practice of giving thanks is about intentionally reviewing your life and the people and opportunities and gifts that have come into it, and acknowledging those things as blessings. Those who hope to

stretch themselves do, in time, grow to include things that might not, from another angle, seem like blessings.

So today I want to challenge you to give thanks to God, who is our creator, our redeemer and our sustainer, for all you have, for all you are and for all that you experience in this life. And more importantly, make giving thanks a part of your daily spiritual life – make it a spiritual discipline.

Pastor Rushan



## Message from Our Church Council Chair

Aloha Central Union Church!

I have observed that people, generally, have grown more impatient over time and I wonder why. Certainly, in just one generation, the pace of life has quickened considerably. When I started practicing law in the early 1980s, there were no desktop computers and no cell phones. Letters and documents were drafted by hand (or dictated to a handheld recorder) and then finalized on an IBM electric typewriter before being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service for delivery (or, if they were urgent, sent via overnight courier). Just a few years later, by the mid-1980s, fax machines became prominent, and when the law firm where I worked at that time obtained a fax machine, I distinctly remember thinking this new technology was compressing time – clients and opposing attorneys would say “just fax it to me” because they did not want to wait a couple days for their letter or document to arrive in the mail. But the time compression that resulted from the use of fax machines was minor compared to the time compression that occurred less than ten years later with the arrival of desktop computers and, a short while after that, the advent of email.

We live in a time where people expect immediate responses. Calls and texts to our cell phones cry out not to be ignored, to be answered right away. And we comply because we know the sender knows we have our cell phones with us at all times. Waiting frustrates us. We grumble if the checkout line at the market has more than one person in front of us (instead of being thankful that food is plentiful and easily accessible). We drive through yellow and sometimes even red traffic lights because we are unwilling to wait the few minutes it will take for the light to turn green again (instead of being thankful for an amazingly reliable and safe transportation system). Even when we are not rushing off somewhere, we find it difficult to sit still and enjoy a quiet moment; instead, we turn to our cell phones to make sure we did not miss anything, or to be entertained by the latest TikTok videos.

Waiting is part of the rhythm of life that should be embraced, not maligned. The farmer who grows the food we eventually will eat must first prepare

the soil, then plant the seeds, then cultivate and water the fields and, finally, wait for it to grow. Growth takes time and it is worth waiting for. At the close of our monthly Council meeting for October, Pastor Rushan shared with the Council the following quotation from Rick Warren’s best-selling book *The Purpose Driven Life*:

“Be patient with God and with yourself. One of life’s frustrations is that God’s timetable is rarely the same as ours. We are often in a hurry when God isn’t. You may feel frustrated with the seemingly slow progress you’re making in life. Remember that God is never in a hurry, but God is always on time. God will use your entire lifetime to prepare you for your role in eternity.... Great souls are grown through struggle and storms and season of suffering. Be patient with the process.”

It was an important reminder to me, especially with the Advent season just around the corner, to slow down, breathe deeply and appreciate all that God has provided and will continue to provide on his timetable – we just need to be patient.

The Council continues to work on several initiatives which I will report on in next month’s Spire. For now, though, we are focused on ensuring a successful stewardship campaign so please be sure to support our church by sending in your Estimate of Giving cards (or by completing them [online](#)) if you have not already done so. I am happy to report that all Council members have submitted their pledges. Many thanks to all for your faithfulness to Central Union Church.

Should you have any questions or otherwise wish to contact me, you can reach me by email at [council-chair@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:council-chair@centralunionchurch.org). Thank you.

Mahalo,  
Carl Schlack







## Celebrating God's Love with PRIDE

For the second year in a row, Central Union Church was represented in the Honolulu Pride Parade held this year on October 21. This parade is organized through the Hawai'i LGBT Legacy Foundation each October during LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) History Month.

Much fun was had being loud and proud about God's love for all—alongside our sister churches, United Church of Christ Judd Street and Nu'uano Congregational Church with whom we walked and shared a trolley. Over 100 groups, including a variety of businesses and organizations, participated in the parade through Waikiki. Greetings of "Happy Pride!" were exclaimed to those gathered along the streets to see the colorful procession celebrating diversity and inclusion.

Accompanying us in the parade was a large cutout of Jesus in a rainbow garment, with outstretched arms (by local artist Erika Pascual, an art student of church member Reem Bassous). "I'm cool with it."—a modern interpretation of something Jesus would most likely say was

added in a speech bubble. Our Jesus brought out smiles, laughs, and cameras!

One of our church members overheard a spectator say, "Wow! So much support from churches!" While our sacred scriptures are often misused to condemn people for their sexual orientation or gender identity, while there are people who are rejected by churches or viewed as sinful for being who God created them to be, until "support from churches" doesn't come as a surprise, it is significant and essential for us as a faith community to be clear about who we welcome and affirm.

At Central Union Church where "We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!", we really mean *ALL*.

If we truly believe in a God of extravagant, unfailing love, may we work to ensure that each person—whatever their sexual orientation or gender identity—is not merely tolerated, not only welcomed, but also affirmed and valued as the beloved child of God that they are!



Our participation in the parade was sponsored by our Community Ministry! Plan to join the fun next year!



Above: Members and friends of Central Union, UCC Judd Street, and Nu'uano Congregational Church



## Fall Fun for CUPS Keiki

**Shelly Taira**, *Assistant Preschool Director*

The month of October ended with a day full of pumpkins and treats at Central Union Preschool.

First the keiki loved stepping into Atherton Courtyard which was turned into a “Pumpkin Patch” sponsored by our dedicated Parent Teacher Organization (PTO). Each student selected their own pumpkin to take home and decorate.

Then the day ended with a “Spooktacular Treat Trek”! There was a plethora of themed tables with activities and treats for the students and their families to enjoy!



Applications for the 2024-2025 school year are currently being accepted for the Preschool program (ages 3-5 years old) through November 30th. Any interested families are encouraged to visit the Central Union Preschool website: [centralunionpreschool.org/admissions](https://centralunionpreschool.org/admissions). Please call the Preschool Office at 808-946-4025 if you are interested in scheduling a tour!

This October, Central Union Church Preschool & Kindergarten celebrated its 95th anniversary! The preschool is a vital part of the mission and ministry of Central Union Church. We celebrate those who have taught and provided leadership at the preschool, those who have supported CUPS, and the many students who have learned and played here over the last 95 years! Here's to many more years of fostering a passion for learning!

## Birthday Blessings!





## Keiki Corner

**Cayanna Herrera**, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Psalms 91:2 describes God as a hen spreading her wings over her chicks. In Isaiah 42, God is described as a mother in labor about to birth her child. Isaiah 66:12 describes a nursing mother and even Jesus uses the imagery of a mother hen gathering her young under her wings in both Matthew 23 and Luke 13. Perhaps most surprising is the description in Hosea 13:8 of God as a mother bear fiercely guarding her babies. What an image! Have you ever imagined God in these ways? Have you ever thought of God as a nurturing mother or fierce maternal protector?



CUC's Children's Ministry is excited to introduce two new books available in our Godly Play classrooms that explore this nurturing God. Both *Mother God* and *Dear Mama God* bring to life this Biblical imagery of God as mother—loving, nurturing, providing for, and protecting. If you would like to explore these beautiful books, stop by our Godly Play rooms and take a look!

Lastly, please join us for our annual **Advent Workshop** on Sunday, November 26 at 10:00 AM. We will be preparing for Advent with a special presentation, project, and Advent activities! Please RSVP with Cayanna Herrera ([cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org)) to enable Children's Ministry to plan for materials! We hope to see you there!



## CU Youth

**Melissa Thach**, *Youth Director*

October was full of fun! Youth Sunday School had great attendance all month as we continued to work our way through the story of Jesus and the Disciples as depicted in *The Chosen*. Over Fall Break, a couple youth volunteered at Serving Aloha and we beat the heat with a trip to Waiola Shave Ice. On October 22nd we joined the 11 AM Worship Team singing "Waymaker" and "Jubilee" and we ended the month with a karaoke party!



## Historic Moment for UCC



UNITED CHURCH  
OF CHRIST



We join in celebrating that God is doing a new thing in the United Church of Christ (UCC)! On October 20, 2023, the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia A. Thompson was installed as the UCC's 10th General Minister and President. Not only is she the first woman in the position, she is also the first woman of African descent and the first immigrant to become head of our denomination. A recording of the celebratory service, which featured a "diversity of religious practices, a wide assembly of interfaith dignitaries and powerful, praise-filled performances" is available [online!](#)

CUC members Elly Chong and Greg Sato, who serve on the UCC Board of Directors, were present at the installation service at Lakewood Congregational Church in Lakewood, Ohio, not far from the UCC's headquarters in Cleveland.

## Mahalo!

Mahalo to those who Gave Aloha! We received a total of **\$7,051.74** from Foodland's Give Aloha program this year. Members and friends of our church donated \$5,474.96 to Central Union Church through Foodland in September. Foodland and the Western Union gave us an additional \$1,576.78 (about 29% of our donations). The Give Aloha program is a great way to help our giving go further!



Photo: Foodland  
Give Aloha Top 100 reception, October 13

## Poinsettias - \$10.00 each

Name (Donor) \_\_\_\_\_

Number of plants \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ To the Glory of Christmas

\_\_\_\_\_ In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ In loving memory of \_\_\_\_\_

Please print legibly.



Please make check(s) payable to "CENTRAL UNION CHURCH" with the word, "Poinsettias" in the memo line. Please mail or bring checks to the church office, by **Monday, December 18**, to be listed in the Christmas Eve and Day bulletins.

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 complete and submit this form. (There is also an option to order and pay online in the *CU Weekly* e-blast.)

## Remembering Our Saints

Please pray for the family of **Penny Lee Garrity**, who died on September 7, 2023. Services are pending.

