



THE SPIRE

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

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Central Union Church: Our Purpose and Our Calling

Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray,
Senior Minister

Why are we a church?

Why do we exist?

What is our purpose and our calling?

Would anyone care or notice if Central Union Church ceased to exist?

Have you ever stopped to ask any of those questions?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and the book of Acts all have a charge that was given to the Church. In each case it sounds slightly different, but it remains essentially the same.

The church exists to help all people grow in faith and to make disciples. This is a bold statement.

So often we focus on other things and ignore or forget our primary reason for being. We put so much energy into maintaining traditions, holding on to ministries and programs and groups that no longer work or are irrelevant, resisting change, arguing over minor irrelevancies and fail to focus on our primary purpose for being. This is hard to hear, but the church's primary calling is not to be a social service agency, a babysitting service, a center for social activism, a museum for preserving the past, or even a fellowship group or club.

All these things are important, but the Christian Church primarily exists to help all people grow in faith and to discern for themselves and as the gathered community the ways in which they can put that faith into practice. This is why we want to see people in our church and community grown in their relationship with God and which is why we want to see the lives of individuals and families change for the better as their relationship with God grows wider and deeper.

The purpose of every sermon we hear, every book we read and every encounter we have in the scriptures is not simply to give us enough to make it through the day or week ahead. That would mean the whole purpose of the church is to cater to us and to our personal wants and needs. It is not. The purpose is to equip and strengthen us to be Christ's disciples in the world.

Touched by the gospel, we can touch those around us. You see, our life as the gathered people of God is meant to bring the transforming power of Jesus Christ into our world. Our primary purpose as the church is about making disciples who in turn make disciples. It is about being so touched by the reality of God's love, that God's love in us touches others. It is about growing our faith and then helping others grow in their faith.



As we move into the vibrant and spirit-filled future that God has in store for Central Union Church, we will be discerning new ways of being church in our world today and working to develop new and innovative ways of reaching and meeting the needs of our community here in Honolulu, Hawai'i. And we will do the work of discernment together as the people of God in this place through prayer and conversation. And everything we will be doing, everything we will be praying for and talking about, begins and ends with one primary question – "how are we drawing all people into a relationship with Jesus Christ, helping them grow in faith and making disciples?"

Blessings,

Pastor Rushan



Holy Humor

Aloha Central Union Church!

Question: If April showers bring May flowers, what do May flowers bring?

Answer: Pilgrims!

Like me, you probably heard that joke many years ago. Funny how simple jokes like that stick with you. I became interested in humor at a young age; when I was in middle school, I would check out books from the library about humor and then read the jokes, puns, limericks, and funny stories in bed at night before I fell asleep. Back then, one of my favorite humor books was *Laugh Day* by writer and publisher Bennett Cerf. It unlocked for me various forms that humor can take and the dawning realization that laughter, whether it be an outwardly audible reaction or just an inward smile, had a positive impact on my disposition.

Although I did not understand why at the time, scientific data has shown both short-term and long-term health benefits from laughter. In an article entitled “Laughter is the Best Medicine”, authors Lawrence Robinson, Melinda Smith, M.A., and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., report that *“laughter is strong medicine. It draws people together in ways that trigger healthy physical and emotional changes in the body. Laughter strengthens your immune system, boosts mood, diminishes pain, and protects you from the damaging effects of stress. Nothing works faster or more dependably to bring your mind and body back into balance than a good laugh. Humor lightens your burdens, inspires hope, connects you to others, and keeps you grounded, focused, and alert. It also helps you relieve anger and forgive sooner.”* I was particularly struck by that last part – that laughter helps you relieve anger **and forgive sooner** – because if we truly seek to **Embody** Christ (as we **Engage** and **Embrace** all), we all need to forgive sooner. If laughter can help us do that, then laughter may truly be the best medicine.

When I heard Pastor Rushan say we were going to celebrate Holy Humor Sunday the week after Easter, my first thought (since I had never heard of Holy Humor Sunday) was Pastor Rushan was playing a joke on us. Then I learned the concept originated centuries ago from the reflections of early church

theologians. No doubt they realized intuitively (without the benefit of today’s scientific research) the positive benefits of laughter. If our inaugural celebration of Holy Humor Sunday went as well as our other services as it did at the Contemporary service, I hope it will become an annual tradition at Central Union.

In years past, April was always a very busy month for the Council, Church staff, and the Church’s various ministries as we prepared for Central Union’s annual Member meeting in May (since our Bylaws required the annual Member meeting be held in May each year). However, recent changes made to our Bylaws to synchronize various church events with our new fiscal year calendar resulted in changing Central Union’s annual Member meeting requirement to September of each year. Although September is still five months away, I wanted to let you know the date for the annual Member meeting has been set for Sunday, September 8, 2024, so please mark your calendars to be sure you can attend this important meeting. More details about the annual Member meeting will be provided as the date gets closer.

If you have taken the time to read this far, you deserve one last bit of church humor (I shared this joke at the Contemporary service this past Holy Humor Sunday but thought it was worth sharing with those who attended other services): *A Sunday school teacher asked his class to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. When the class turned in their pictures, the teacher was confused by one young girl’s picture which showed four people on an airplane. The teacher asked the girl what biblical story it represented, and she replied, “the flight to Egypt”. “I see,” said the teacher, “and that must be Mary, Joseph, and the Baby Jesus, but who is the fourth person?” “Oh,” the young girl replied, “that is Pontius the Pilot.”*

As we leave the shadow of the empty tomb and walk out into the resurrection light, let each of us do so with joy in our heart, a smile on our face and laughter on our lips knowing that Christ is risen – He is risen indeed!

Mahalo,
Carl Schlack
Council Chair
council-chair@centralunionchurch.org

Spring Concerts & Choral Festivals!

Margaret Lloyd, *Director of Music Ministries*

In the months of March and April 2024, 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 3: 19th Annual AGO Organ Recital

The American Guild of Organists Hawai'i Chapter co-sponsored another annual recital featuring a "rising star" as a gift to the community. This year's artist was James Kealey, Interim

Director of Music/Organist at Third Presbyterian Church in Rochester, NY, and a candidate for the Doctor of Music Arts degree at the Eastman School of Music. James is represented in North America by Karen McFarlane Artists, Inc.

March 15: 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 85 high school students in three choirs from California and a featured performance by the 30-voice California Baptist University Camerata.

Festival Director was Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan, Artistic Director at CUC.



March 17: Choral Concert

Nā Wai Chamber Choir, CUC's Ensemble-in-Residence under the direction of Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan, presented *Stabat Mater* by Giovanni Battista Pergolesi featuring Emily Vidler, soprano; Sarah Young, mezzo soprano; and Margaret Lloyd, organ.

March 25: Pacific Basin Music Festival

This 39th annual five-day choral and instrumental event on O'ahu included an adjudicated choral festival at CUC organized by World Projects with 74 high school students in two choirs from CO and OR and a featured performance by the 24-voice Chamber Singers from UH-Mānoa, under the direction of Dr. Joshua Habermann.

Adjudicators from O'ahu were Dr. Joshua Habermann, UH-Mānoa; Nola Nāhulu, Hawai'i Youth Opera Chorus; and Dr. Alec Schumacker, HPU.



March 22: WorldStrides Heritage Festival

This adjudicated choral festival included 309 high school students and 40 middle school students in 12 choirs from CA, HI, KS, NV, and Vietnam. Adjudicators from O'ahu were Mark Conching, director of The Sounds of Aloha Chorus; Dr. Erica Glenn, BYU-HI; and Dr. Alec Schumacker, HPU.



April 5: Choirs of America Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i

Choirs of America returned for a second all-day choral festival that included 62 high school students in three choirs from AZ, CA and WA and a featured performance by the 18-voice

International Chorale from HPU, under the direction of Dr. Alec Schumacker. Festival Director was Dr. Jace Kaholokula Saplan and this event also included hula immersion, co-taught by Dr. Saplan and Sarah Young, Director of Choirs at CUC.





CU Youth

Melissa Thach, Youth Director

As we look toward the start of our Confirmation Class, which is for 6th-12th grade students who have not yet been confirmed, all participants are expected to volunteer in the life of our church and wider community. Over spring break, youth helped at the Serving Aloha food distribution, and on Easter Sunday, youth helped to set up and clean up for the ‘Ohana Easter Egg Hunt! We appreciate their helping hands and their youthful spirits! We are pacing and bracing ourselves for all the end-of-the-school-year events to come.



Keiki Corner

Cayanna Herrera, Director of Children’s Ministries

Did you know that Easter encompasses seven Sundays? The Mystery of Easter is so big that it simply cannot be celebrated on one day, it requires weeks and weeks of celebration! I hope your Eastertide is a happy and blessed one.

On Easter Sunday, our keiki gathered to collect Easter eggs in our annual ‘Ohana Easter Egg Hunt. This year, due to the amazing outpouring of care for our community, each Easter egg represented a \$0.60 donation to the Aloha Diaper Bank for a total monetary donation of \$1,500! Additionally, we were able to share more than 1,500 diapers and over 2,300 wipes for families experiencing diaper need thanks to the many folks who brought in donations! WOW! What a wonderful way to share our blessings this Easter with those who need it most.

This season, I pray we each find ways to be a blessing to those around us as we explore the great Mystery of Easter!

Holy Week Happenings

Palm Sunday • Celebrating Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem



Maundy Thursday • Remembering Jesus' final meal with his disciples



Good Friday • Remembering Jesus' crucifixion and death



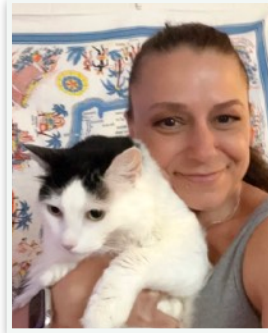
Easter Sunday • Celebrating Christ's resurrection. Alleluia! Christ is risen!



New Beginnings for Young(ish) Adult Ministry

Melinda Dallass, Lindsey Garnick, and Rev. Mary Herbig, *Young(ish) Adult Leadership Team*

The leadership of Central Union Church is absolutely committed to caring for and supporting the young adults and young families of our church 'ohana. It is in that light that a new Young(ish) Adult Leadership Team has been formed. This team is tasked with helping to set the direction for this vital ministry, so that we can provide space for connection and growth, as we respond to the needs of Generations X, Y, and Z.



Melinda (voting member) & Biscuit (non-voting member)



Lindsey (voting member) & Mahina (non-voting member)



Pastor Mary (staff liaison) & Kala (non-voting member)

As a team, we have identified three hopes for our Ministry:

- ▶ Provide space where Gen X, Y, & Z can be authentically themselves, creating meaningful connection and building deep community
- ▶ Offer opportunities to grow in knowledge, wisdom, faith, and community
- ▶ Shine God's light on our island through works of service and justice

We are really excited to begin this more formal chapter of our Young(ish) Adult Ministry!

On Saturday, April 27, we will gather at Ala Moana Beach Park from 2 to 5 PM for our "New Beginnings" kick-off party of our Young(ish) Adult Ministry where we will share more about our future plans. If you are part of Generations X, Y, or Z, we would love to see you there! We hope to reach our goal of 30 people!

If you are interested in joining the Leadership Team, we'd love to have you – let Pastor Mary know and she can help get you plugged in! (Contact: mary-herbig@centralunionchurch.org) We believe in diversity and inclusion in leadership, so dog people 🐶 would be welcome additions to the team.



Community Ministry prepares meals for our neighbors on the 2nd Tuesdays.

Because of YOU!

April is Global Volunteer Month — a time to not only do something good for our community, but also a time to recognize and celebrate the impact of volunteers. A church is not its facilities or treasured history, but rather its people, and we at Central Union Church have countless people who willingly, freely, and generously give of their time and skills to

"Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!" to share God's love, to amplify our impact within our church 'ohana and the wider community. Those who help in worship, prepare and beautify worship spaces, set up and clean up behind the scenes, lead small groups, serve on committees, show up for meetings, respond to requests for help, volunteer as receptionists, share gifts of art and song, assist in the Thrift Shop, participate in Serving Aloha, prepare meals for our neighbors, care for our keiki and kūpuna—all these volunteers are essential for our shared ministry and the vitality of our church. Know that you are seen, valued, and appreciated! THANK YOU!!!!

LOOKING AHEAD

April 14

4 PM Service of Installation – Pastor Rushan

April 26

DAZZLE 2024, Preschool fundraiser

May 3

CUPS Lei Day program

May 5

UCC Pacific Islander and Asian American Ministries (PAAM) Sunday at CUC

May 19 – Pentecost Sunday

10 AM, Sanctuary – One in-person service

Celebrating the 100th anniversary of the dedication of our Sanctuary

June 2

Collect UCC Strengthen the Church offering

June 13-15 – ‘Aha Pae‘āina

CUC to host Hawai‘i Conference gathering

June 22

E-waste collection on campus

July 22-26

Children’s Ministry Compassion Camp

July 26-28

Youth Retreat on Kaua‘i

Remembering Our Saints

Please pray for the family of **Violet “Lois” Denning**. She died on March 26, 2024. Services are pending.



D A Z Z L E 2 0 2 4

FRIDAY EVENING, APRIL 26

On the CUPS campus in Honolulu



FOOD + MUSIC + CAMARADERIE + AUCTION
TO SUPPORT CENTRAL UNION PRESCHOOL

Purchase tickets online: bit.ly/DAZZLE24DreamBig

Dream Big and DAZZLE!

Tickets are on sale for DAZZLE 2024, Central Union Preschool's annual fundraiser happening on **Friday, April 26**. Come for an evening of good food from local chefs, music, and camaraderie on the CUPS campus! There will be auctions in person and online.

Funds from DAZZLE help to support educational curriculum, tuition assistance programs, and more!

Get your tickets online! bit.ly/DAZZLE24DreamBig

