

# THE SPIRE

The background of the cover is a photograph of a stone church building. A large, arched stone doorway is the central focus, with a decorative wrought-iron gate and a cross above it. To the right of the arch, a black lantern-style light fixture is mounted on the wall. In the foreground, a large, vibrant bouquet of pink roses is spread out, partially obscuring the bottom of the archway.

August 8, 2024,  
marked 1 year since  
the Maui wildfires.  
At noon, our  
Sanctuary carillon  
sounded for nearly  
7 minutes straight;  
102 tolls, one for each  
life lost in the fires.  
102 pink roses were  
laid out as a visual  
remembrance.

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

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## Pastor's Page: Who Are We?

**Rev. A. Rushan Sinnaduray,**  
*Senior Minister*

Who are we? It's the question that philosophers and poets tease at in their lines, and that politicians and economists theorize about. How much are

we shaped and honed by the contexts and cultures, families and friendships into which we are born? How much are we the products of our genes; our futures mapped by DNA's idiosyncrasies buried deep within every cell? Who are we?

Scripture does a great job in helping us discern the stunning reality of who we are, of our truest identity, of the fullness of possibility that each and every human being contains, telling us the truth about ourselves.

There are many truths that I draw from the Bible that help me discern who I am and who we are. The one that speaks to me in this moment in time is that we are the children of God who are made for community. We're not made for lives as isolated fortresses; we're not designed to craft islands for ourselves upon which to look out at the world as if we are not a part of it. We're woven together into the fabric and web of life on Earth; interdependence and community are as much our DNA as the uniqueness of our individuality. Of course, we all have our own unique fingerprint, but we share with one another in holding hands.

The first creation story in Genesis 1 (there's another in Genesis 2) shows God's creative work, ticking off the mighty acts of star, sun, moon, ocean, mountain and then the teeming mysteries of all life. This story is not a piece of history, nor science, to explain where we come from, but poetry which tells us that we are unique individuals designed by God to share space and time and place and life with others, and

with creation itself. So, as people created for community and sharing, how well do we live and engage in ministry together in this church, Central Union Church? What is the quality of our sharing? Have we shaped a community here that encourages and enables each of us to find our place, to be valued and cherished, but also to be called accountable for the ways in which we value and cherish everyone else?

These things matter because the ways of the world today tell a different story and offer a different truth. Look out for yourself first, we hear. Christianity is a solo endeavor that is all about personal salvation, we are told. Shape your own life, make something of yourself. Yet, Scripture begins with God's creative purpose and says, in contrast, discover your true identity by sharing your life in community. Know who you are by placing yourself in the company of others and caring for them.



"Celebration" by John August Swanson, 1997

So, who are we? We are the children of God, made in the very image of God, created to share our lives with one another in love and in hope.

Blessings,  
Pastor Rushan





## Council Chair's Thoughts

Aloha Central Union Church!

This is my last Spire article as Chair of the Church Council. In less than a month, on Sunday, September 8, 2024, at our Annual Member and Budget Meeting, the members of Central Union Church will assemble to address important church business, including the election of a new Council Chair and seven other new Council members. It is a significant event in the life of our church as we transition to a new lay leadership team so I hope you will make every effort to attend this annual meeting (either in person or via Zoom), which will be held in the Parish Hall at 11:00 AM, immediately following the one, combined in-person worship service at 10:00 AM in the Sanctuary (which will be in lieu of the 7:00, 9:00, and 11:00 AM services). Coincidentally, the date of our annual meeting is the one-year anniversary of the day that Pastor Rushan and his family arrived in Honolulu to begin his ministry among us!

This past weekend, I finished writing the annual report of the Council Chair that will be included as part of the Central Union Church Annual Report for 2023-2024, along with annual reports from our Senior Minister, Staff Leaders, and from various church ministries and committees. So rather than use this space to provide a brief report on the work of the Council, I strongly encourage you to allocate some time to read the Central Union Church Annual Report which will be made available prior to the annual meeting. In doing so, you will learn (or re-learn) about the many facets of Central Union Church and the positive impact we are having on our community. It is our story; it is our history; I hope you will take the time to read it.

The 27 months since I became Council Chair (in May 2022) has been a tremendous journey – one that I will not forget. Like most journeys, it has had its ups and downs, its challenges and

successes, but all have served as opportunities for growth. As a congregation, we traveled quite a distance in those 27 months. At the start, we were just emerging from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic with two ministers (Pastor Brandon and Pastor Mary) and seemingly miles and miles to go in the search for a new senior minister. Then, seven months later, Pastor Brandon left for the mainland and Pastor Mary stepped up to fill the void for the next nine months until we called Pastor Rushan as our new Senior Minister who has almost completed his first year with us. For me, it has been a humbling experience that has deepened my faith and my belief in the mission of Central Union Church and the many people who bring that mission to life. Certainly, one of the more significant highlights of my time as Chair has been the opportunity to work with our ministers, our staff, fellow Council members and many in our congregation that I otherwise would not have gotten to know as well. They are wonderful people and a blessing to our church.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for allowing me to share news of the Council, information about other church events, and some of my own thoughts and reflections in these monthly Spire articles over the past 27 months. It has been a privilege and honor to serve as Council Chair.

Should you wish to contact me before the annual meeting on September 8, 2024, please send your email to [council-chair@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:council-chair@centralunionchurch.org).

Mahalo,  
Carl Schlack  
*Council Chair*



# Responding to the Ongoing Crisis in Gaza: An Update

## World Mission Ministry

Several months ago, we shared our World Mission Ministry's deep concern about the ongoing crisis in Gaza and our commitment to help by sending \$3,000. The funds would be used to build water pipelines to provide Palestinian refugees with clean water. However, as we worked with the UCC's Global Ministries, it became clear that the funds needed to be used to meet more urgent and critical needs. We are grateful that the Holy Spirit has given us flexibility and we want to share with you, our community of faith, how our funds are being used.

Our funds are supporting Global Ministries' partners on the ground in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Southern Lebanon. These partners are helping to provide:

- ▶ **Financial assistance** to meet their immediate needs, such as food and hygiene kits
- ▶ **Rehabilitation of homes** that have sustained minor damage, rent provisions, and safe and habitable living conditions

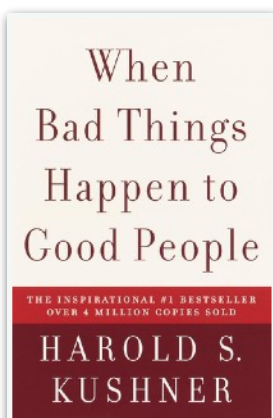


People receive help from the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees of the Middle East Council of Churches (DSPR-MECC), a member of ACT Alliance. Photo: DSPR

- ▶ **Livelihood restoration** that includes one-to-three months emergency job opportunities
- ▶ **Access to medical services** and medication
- ▶ **Psychosocial assistance** to help with the emotional and psychological toll of the war
- ▶ **Educational services** specifically for the displaced university students of Gaza

We continue to be in prayer for our siblings who are struggling to survive the horrors of war and are grateful for the opportunity to share what we have in order to aid them. May we always be a people who pray and call for peace in all places where there is pain and brokenness – and may our actions always match our words!

## Upcoming Book Study



When **Rabbi Harold Kushner's** three-year-old son was diagnosed with a degenerative disease that meant the boy would only live until his early teens, he was faced with one of life's most difficult questions: "Why, God?" Years later, Rabbi Kushner wrote this straightforward, elegant contemplation of the doubts and fears that arise when tragedy strikes. In this book, Kushner shares his wisdom as a rabbi, a parent, a reader, and a human being. Often imitated but never superseded, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* offers clear thinking and consolation in times of sorrow and challenge. Join us for a **4-session book study** of this classic as we reflect on our lives and on the suffering we see in the world around us. Copies of the book will be available for purchase if you'd like. Scan the QR code or visit [bit.ly/sep2024cucbook](https://bit.ly/sep2024cucbook) to sign up online!



**Tuesdays, 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM**  
September 3, 10, 17, 24

**Thursdays, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM**  
September 5, 12, 19, 26



# Youth Begin Confirmation Journey

**Melissa Thach**, *Youth Director*

Our Youth Confirmation Kick-Off retreat happened July 26-27 here on O'ahu. (We were supposed to go to Kaua'i but postponed our trip due to the brush fires.) On Friday we visited significant historic and spiritual places including the Mission Houses, Pali lookout, Byodo-In Temple in Kāne'ohe, and Ulupō Heiau in Kailua. We ended the night with a bon dance at Pālolo Hongwanji. On Saturday we adventured to the west side to explore Kaneana Cave, hike Ka'ena Point, and swim at Mākua Beach. It was a full weekend, exploring life's big questions and the answers different religions and cultures offer. This journey will continue through the school year with more field trips and exploration!





# CUPS Wraps Up the Summer

**Alana Anderson,**  
*Advancement & Communications Manager,  
Central Union Preschool*

It was an exciting Summer at CUPS! For eight weeks, every day, students played, made new friends, and learned something fun from their teachers, going home each afternoon with homemade treats, artwork, and tales of their adventures.

The keiki were treated to Water Play, they got to dress up as their favorite animal or character, such as a Disney Princess or Prince, and birthdays were celebrated with cupcakes and other goodies from parents.



Our keiki also expanded their horizons with field trips to various hot spots around the island—they visited Waikiki Aquarium, Honolulu Zoo, and the Hawai'i Children's Discovery Museum.

On-campus summer highlights included:



► **Shave Ice Day:**  
special treats from the Braithwaite Family for the entire school (teachers and staff, also),



► **Fairytales by the Storytime Entertainers,**  
who turned ordinary tales into extraordinary stories and interactive play!

► **Mahalo Picnic:**  
family and friends came to CUPS for an afternoon to thank the staff, catch a glimpse of the campus, and share a meal in the company of fellow parents and even happier children.



The Summer closed on July 19 with promises to “see you next year!” (or three weeks later when Fall Session would begin). Keiki, new and regular attendees, reacquainted themselves with one another as cherished friendships bloomed beneath sunny skies.

Everyone looked forward to the new school year where an even more exciting curriculum, additional teachers, and many other opportunities to make friends would come to life. At CUPS, where happiness is on the agenda, you can always guarantee smiles and laughter from everyone!



Stay tuned for new updates and events, such as the Back to School Picnic, Pumpkin Patch, and the Fall Fitness FUNdraiser, the PTO's one and only fundraiser for the school year. To learn more about how you can sponsor or donate to Fall Fitness, please contact Alana Anderson at [alana@centralunionpreschool.org](mailto:alana@centralunionpreschool.org) or directly at 917-623-5913.



# Keiki Corner

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

The last weeks of summer have been busy for Central Union Church's Children's Ministry. During the week of July 22-26 we held our fourth annual Compassion Camp with the theme of God's Global Kids. What fun we had exploring the world around us, encountering friends from other places and discovering how we can love others and care for our planet home.



**August 11** • We celebrated the new school year with our annual Backpack Blessing and Moving Up Day, praying for all of those heading back to school, children and adults alike!



## COMING UP

- **Godly Play for grown-ups** at 10:00 AM in the Women's Building – **August 18** (The Great Family) & **August 25** (The Good Shepherd)
- **September:** Family Dinner; **Godly Play Storyteller Training** for adults (September 14, 21, 28)  
Contact [cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org)
- **November:** Beach Day; Annual Advent Workshop

## Young(ish) Adults – Generations X, Y, Z



Did you know that polo originated in Asia and is one of the world's oldest team sports? Our young(ish) adults and families spent the afternoon of August 11 out at polo on the North Shore – thanks to CUC member Raymond Noh for hosting us!



## LOOKING AHEAD

**August 18: 'Ukulele classes** begin  
1-2 PM, Women's Building (currently full)

**August 18 & 25: Learning Tree**  
10 AM, Women's Building  
*Godly Play for grown-ups!*  
*Stories will tie in with the sermon for the day.*



**August 22: Chancel Choir rehearsals start**  
(Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 PM, Music Building)

**August 25: Young(ish) Adults Breakfast**  
10 AM, Location TBD

**September: Give Aloha** at Foodland all month long. *Make your giving go farther!*

**September 1: Laity Sunday** (7, 9, 11 AM)  
**JAZZ VESPERS** (first Sundays)  
5:30-6:30 PM, Atherton Chapel



**Book Study begins**  
**September 3**, 6:00-7:30 PM (Tuesday)  
**September 5**, 10:30-12 PM (Thursday)

**September 8:**  
**10 AM - One service** (Sanctuary)  
**11 AM - Annual Member & Budget Meeting**  
(Parish Hall & Zoom)

**September 15: Aloha Sunday** (7, 9, 11 AM)  
**Service of Healing & Prayer**  
5:30-6:30 PM (third Sundays)  
Atherton Chapel



**September 26: Young(ish) Adults Evening Gathering**, Location TBD

**October 6: World Communion Sunday, Pet Blessing, Potluck**

**October 11: Boy Scouts Troop 777 Recruitment Open House**, 6:30 PM  
(Music Building)



**2024 WOMEN'S RETREAT**  
**November 1-3**  
*Camp Mokule'ia*



**35TH ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT 2024**



**RAINBOW OF JOYFUL CONNECTIONS**

INFO & REGISTRATION:  
[bit.ly/cuc2024womensretreat](https://bit.ly/cuc2024womensretreat)

## VITAL STATS

### Welcome, New Members!

*We are excited to have received the following members into the CUC community this year:*

**August:** Elizabeth Neill (Windward Campus)  
**July:** Michael Sudol, Nisha Mei Christiansen, Aslain Joel, Charles Field  
**May:** Jeffrey Curry, Thomas Ekman  
**March:** Joan O'Mara, Tiago Paiva, Nikolas Nikolaidis, Arisa Nikolaidis

### Newly Baptized This Year:

Nisay William, Jeremy Sarmiento, Jaime Wong, Laveah Edgar, Kanōpu'uonāmoku Kamohoali'i Winona Uli'i Lila Cruz



## Remembering Our Saints

Please hold in prayer the family of **Mildred "Millie" Tom** who died on July 5, 2024. Services were held on Tuesday, August 6, at Borthwick Mortuary with burial at Hawaiian Memorial Park Cemetery.