

THE SPIRE



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

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Pastor's Page: Hope is not passive

Rev. A. Rushan Sinnaduray
Senior Minister

Here we are at the beginning of another liturgical year (Advent) and approaching the start of a new calendar year (January!). It is a time to celebrate all that God has been doing in our church over the past 12 months and to look forward to what God is planning to do next. The theme that is woven through everything at the turning of the year is the word HOPE. Are you feeling hopeful?

I truly believe we can feel hopeful because the best years of this church are yet to come. If I had asked that same question 3 or 4 years ago, the answer might not have been the same. Through no fault of anyone, some unpredictable factors and circumstances led this church into a challenging time. A global pandemic, ministerial transition, declining numbers, financial struggles, and the absence of familiar faces made it hard to feel hopeful.

Many churches around us—UCC and other denominations—are really struggling. Society has changed. People are busy. The average age in churches is increasing. Churches are closing or merging. It is hard to feel hopeful in tough situations.

Hope is a powerful thing. The fantasy author, Laini Taylor, wrote, “Hope can be a powerful force. Maybe there's no actual magic in it, but when you know what you hope for most and hold it like a light within you, you can make things happen, almost like magic.”

However, that quote might make us think that all we have to do is “hope” and everything will turn out fine. I am not convinced that is true. The

reality is that if we want God to work in our church or in our lives, we must do more than just think hopeful thoughts.

First, there is a spiritual element to what we need to do. We need to be connected to the vine so that we can be fruitful. We need to strengthen our spiritual and worship lives. We need to grow in faith. It is not us that makes things happen—we need to look at what God is already doing in our church and in our world and use our talents to join in. If we want to see the hopes we have for our church come alive, the first step is to pray, to seek God with all our hearts, to put Jesus at the center of all we do, and to listen to the voice of God calling to us.

There is also a practical element to what we need to do. Being hopeful is not passive. To claim the promises of God, we actually have to put in the hard work and participate, realizing that it will take time, energy, and resources. We need to work together as the people of God to rebuild and renew this small part of the body of Christ. That means focusing on strengthening our community again, embracing the diversity of gifts that we share, and learning to love each other so that we can journey together towards God's dream for this church.

And so, I want to end with a passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians that we will soon be using every week at the end of our worship services. It serves as a reminder that hope becomes reality only if we allow God to work through us:

“Glory to God, whose power working in us can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine. Glory to God, from generation to generation, in the church and in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 3:20-21).



LIVE STREAM WORSHIP FROM THE SANCTUARY

We now live-stream our 9 AM traditional worship service on Sunday mornings. Check out our in-person worship service from wherever you are! We will be changing our online prerecorded worship service going into 2025. You can find our live worship videos through our website (centralunionchurch.org) or on our **YouTube channel:** youtube.com/@centralunionchurchhawaii/streams.



The 75th Presentation of Messiah

We celebrated the [75th presentation of Messiah](#) at Central Union on the second Sunday of Advent! With 77 singers from the church and wider community (including Chamber Singers of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) forming The Hawai'i Nui Chorale and 14 musicians from the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra, Handel's beloved oratorio was brought to life in our sanctuary once again. It was a blessing to share this tradition with the nearly 800 people who came to hear the story of Christ through song, which inspires us anew as we continue through the Advent and Christmas seasons!



Pictured left to right: Keith Wallace (tenor), A. Ezinne Dawson (mezzo soprano), Dr. Christopher R. Kelsey (bass), Natalie Mitchell (soprano), Sarah Young (Director of Choirs), Margaret Lloyd (harpsichordist, Director of Music Ministries), Dr. Alec Schumacker (guest conductor)

Above left: Pastor Rushan and Dr. Alec Schumacker, this year's *Messiah* conductor, shared about the 75th presentation on [KITV's Island Life live show](#) on December 2, inviting all to attend.

Children's Ministry

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

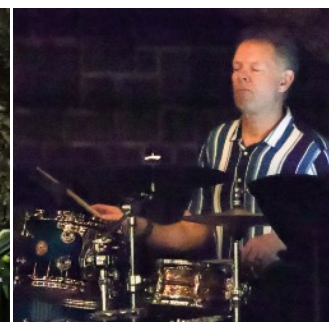
On November 24, a full week before the start of Advent, CUC's Children's Ministry hosted our annual intergenerational Advent Workshop! We spent time learning about Advent, the meaning of the Advent Wreath, and even how our church year begins with this wonderful season of preparation. Then we got to work creating our special tropical Advent wreaths. We sure had fun putting them together and hope you will join us next year at our Advent Workshop as we get ready to get ready for Christmas!



Jazz Vespers



December's Jazz Vespers service was held under the twinkling lights of Atherton Courtyard on the first Sunday of Advent. A record number of people from the church and wider community came out to hear Christmas songs performed by Cheryl Bartlett & Rachel Gonzales (vocals), Shawn Conley (bass), Jim Guss (guitar), Scott Shafer (drums), and even Pastor Rushan on the saxophone. Between songs was a mix of poetry, storytelling, quiet, and prayer for the soul. Jazz Vespers will start up again in February 2025.





Day of Prayer and Public Witness



Church member Melinda Dallass, who was part of the team that helped to organize the sign-waving action, shared a prayer with the people gathered:

“Heavenly father, we are so thankful that you have allowed us to come together in unity to pray for and take action for Palestine and Lebanon. We pray that you would bless this time together and help us to reach hearts and minds of new people today. Thank you for being with us even in this small step. We know that through your love, this small act will be multiplied in ways that are greater than we can imagine.

In this season of Christ's birth, we pray for the people of Palestine and Lebanon, who are recovering right now from the mind-blowing violence that's been inflicted on them for well over a year and more than two Christmases. We grieve for the people who live in the place where Jesus was born, and we grieve the rubble that it has been reduced to. We pray that you will protect the people in both Palestine and Lebanon, as well as all the other genocides that are happening right now around the world, and that you will help us to know within our lifetime an enduring peace. May we carry their suffering and pain for them and with them through the Advent season and beyond. In Jesus' name, we pray.

December 10, Human Rights Day, was designated as the [Day of Prayer and Public Witness](#) in the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ this year. All churches and members were encouraged to engage in some way as a faithful response to the resolution “A Call to Education and Action Regarding the Crisis in Gaza.” Representatives from CUC's Community, World Mission, and Young(ish) Adult Ministries decided that our church would participate through a sign-waving campaign. While more than 45,000 people ([children aged 5-9 most represented](#)) have been killed in Gaza and surrounding areas largely funded by the U.S. government over the past year, this was an opportunity to live out our faith beyond the church walls and put our prayers in action by raising awareness, making it known that we will not be silent in the face of injustice, and calling for concrete ways to make peace possible in Palestine.



Mahalo, Troop 777!

Scouts and friends from Troop 777 helped to freshen up some of our curbs, driveway, and parking areas with the guidance of our Buildings and Grounds staff.

The curb lining the main driveway in front of the Sanctuary is painted red and yellow (no longer with any blue areas). **Red** indicates areas where vehicles should never park. **Yellow** areas are available for anyone to park in, but we encourage reserving those areas for quick stops, loading/unloading, and people with mobility issues so they can park closer to the areas they need to access.



Scholarship Opportunities



The Central Union Church Women's League is excited to offer two scholarship opportunities to support students pursuing higher education. Awards in previous years ranged from \$1,000 to \$2,000*, and prior recipients may reapply.

Available Scholarships

Kenneth O. and Doris A. Rewick Educational Aid Fund

Open to Hawai'i students enrolled or planning to enroll in accredited undergraduate, graduate, or specialized training programs beyond high school. Full-time, part-time, and online students are eligible.

Ruth C. Scudder Scholarship

Awarded to female students from Hawai'i with a Christian affiliation enrolled in the University of Hawai'i system. Preference is given to United Church of Christ (UCC) members and upperclassmen.

How to Apply

- ➔ Applications are accepted exclusively through ScholarsApp. Visit [ScholarsApp.com](https://www.scholarsapp.com) to create an account and access more information.
- ➔ The application deadline is **February 28, 2025**. For questions, email cucwlscholarship@gmail.com.

*Award amounts may vary annually at the discretion of the Women's League.



CUPS Keiki and 'Ohana Get their Fit On!

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

Although the leaves may not be changing colors, nor are we getting ready for Winter, something even more exciting happens each Fall at CUPS and 2024 was no exception. On November 15, after months of anticipation and preparation, Fall Fitness 2024 descended upon the CUPS Campus. Fall Fitness is the PTO's one and only fundraiser for the year and all proceeds support CUPS' beloved events. The money raised also helps to fund our school yearbook, classroom supplies, playground equipment, and Staff Appreciation Day. Parents, family, and friends had the opportunity to make a donation, whether it was a \$5 gift or \$5,000, to help their child's class reach one of two goals – 1st to Reach 100% Participation and the Highest Donation Amount.

This year's Fall Fitness invited parents to not only attend, but also PARTICIPATE alongside their keiki. Dressed in their best fitness attire, our CUPS 'Ohana were ready to get fit at an amazing lineup of activities led by CUPS friends. Throughout the morning, keiki rotated between three stations. Parents and kiddos stretched and bended to kid-friendly poses in gentle yoga with CUPS Mom Kat Nakada of Lagree O'ahu. Muscles relaxed, the duos and trios kicked and practiced soccer maneuvers with Alex and Keiki Kicks. The third station introduced exciting elements such as bouncy houses and gymnastic moves to complete the obstacle course with Coach Kerry from Flipside Studios. Needless to say, both parents and kiddos had a great workout by the end of the three sessions.

The PTO went above and beyond for both the keiki and staff with special treats following the activities. Kiddos enjoyed delicious drinks and snacks and to end the day, class photos were taken in front of a colorful balloon arch with real gold medals that proclaimed everyone a winner!

We'd like to say an extra special thank you, **mahalo nui loa**, to each and every parent, friend, and family member who contributed to Fall Fitness. For the first time in CUPS history, the PTO raised an extraordinary amount, surpassing their goal and doubling last year's total! Over \$67,000 was donated by our very generous CUPS 'Ohana from September through November. Just as exciting was the 94% participation! The PTO will be able to put on amazing events throughout the year because of our CUPS 'Ohana! Fall Fitness 2024 went above and beyond all of our expectations! We look forward to the next PTO event coming up in December to get us all in the Christmas Spirit!



LOOKING AHEAD

December 12: Church Council Meeting

December 13: Young(ish) Adult Christmas Party

December 15: White Gifts Pageant @ 9 AM
Wear your most festive Christmas outfit to worship!
Youth Christmas Party

December 21: Service of Compassion & Hope

December 22: Christmas Open House

December 24: Christmas Eve Services

December 25 & 26: One Christmas Day Service,
Church Office closed

December 29: One Worship Service @ 10 AM
in the Parish Hall, with live stream to YouTube

Christmas OPEN HOUSE

12.22.24

10-11 AM

Women's Building

Enjoy holiday treats
and fellowship!



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS

WITH CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

ADVENT • Sunday, December 1, 8, 15, 22

Worship at 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM + online; 12/15 **White Gifts Pageant** @ 9 AM
12/1 **Christmas Jazz Vespers** @ 5:30 PM; 12/8 **Messiah** concert @ 7:30 PM

WINTER SOLSTICE • Saturday, December 21, 2024

6:30 PM Service of Compassion and Hope - Atherton Memorial Chapel

CHRISTMAS EVE • Tuesday, December 24, 2024

5:30 PM Family Christmas Service - Sanctuary

7:00 PM ONLINE Christmas Eve Service - centralunionchurch.org

8:00 PM Candlelight Service & Carols (prelude at 7:30 PM) - Sanctuary

10:30 PM Candlelight Service & Carols (prelude at 10 PM) - Sanctuary

6:00 PM Candlelight Service & Carols - Windward campus (38 Kāne'ohe Bay Drive)

CHRISTMAS DAY • Wednesday, December 25, 2024

10:00 AM Lessons & Carols - Sanctuary

11:00 AM Pohnpei Ministry Service - Atherton Memorial Chapel

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS • December 29, 2024

10:00 AM One Worship Service - Parish Hall



VITAL STATS

Welcome, New Members! Grant Itomitsu; Sean & Jacquelyn Holliday

Baptized into the universal church and the body of Christ:
Karen Ho; Luc Holliday (parents are Sean & Jacquelyn Holliday)