

THE SPIRE



Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the Lenten season, the 40 days that precede Holy Week and Easter.

We remember our mortality and commit to releasing that which keeps us from living in full and right relationship with God.

Lent is a time of repentance and renewal, a time to align our intentions and actions, and to prepare for the Good News of Easter.

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

March 2025

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Pastor's Page: The Work of Resurrection

Rev. A. Rushan Sinnaduray
Senior Minister

One of my favorite musicals is *Jesus Christ Superstar*. It was released in the early 1970s, at a time when all sorts of new

interpretations of the Jesus story were being released. The most interesting aspect of *Superstar* is the interpretation of Judas. In Sunday School, Judas was the pinup boy for betrayal. When I was a kid, I thought his name was Judas Asparagus. I thought he was so evil that they named him after the nastiest tasting vegetable in the world.

Haven't you always thought of Judas as the epitome of evil, an unrepentant snitch? Andrew Lloyd Webber had other ideas. He gave Judas all the best songs in the musical and presented Judas as being the disciple with a conscience who truly cared about the poor. Andrew Lloyd Webber was a prophet in 1971, as it was only a few years later that the Gnostic *Gospel of Judas* was released to the public.

The *Gospel of Judas* is fascinating because it portrays Judas as carrying out Jesus' own instructions. Judas was the favored disciple of Jesus, the most trusted ally. It doesn't mean that this new interpretation of Judas is the true one. It just questions our life-long assumptions about Judas, and causes us to wonder if we really know the whole story about Judas.

Why is this important? It challenges whether you can find space in your heart for a fallible character like Judas.

So here's a thought for this Easter.

There is a faith that we all share. ALL of us. How deep is your forgiveness? How far does it extend? Would it go so far as to accept even Judas? Will you liberate yourself from all the assumptions you have about the Easter story,

especially the assumptions that make you feel self righteous? Will you liberate the Easter story from being a Disney tale of good triumphing over evil, and let it be a story of radical forgiveness and universal acceptance?

One of the last verses in Bob Dylan's song, *God on Our Side*, says this-



"A Wide Embrace" | Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Inspired by Luke 23:32-49
Sanctified Art Lenten Devotional

"In a many dark hour
I've been thinkin' about this
That Jesus Christ
Was betrayed by a kiss
But I can't think for you
You'll have to decide
Whether Judas Iscariot
Had God on his side."

This Easter, you'll have to decide whether Judas had God on his side. Whether the detractors in your life have God on their side. Whether your inner critic has God on its side.

Or maybe God doesn't take sides, and the Easter challenge for you is to stop dividing the world up into good and bad, betrayer and victim, left and right, Republican and Democrat, Liberal and Conservative. After all, you don't always know the whole story.

This Easter, rise above judgment and bitterness. Practice forgiveness and resurrection. Just as you have seen the possibility of liberation for Judas, you can liberate yourself from the betrayals of the past. The past is what it is. Now you choose who you want to be in the present.

This Easter, consider a perspective so large, compassion so deep, and forgiveness so wide that it might even include the betrayer. Forgiveness can't change the past. But it can open up an incredible future of freedom and peace. This is resurrection.

I choose to do the work of resurrection, beginning in my own life. How about you?

Blessings and peace,
Pastor Rushan



Message from Pastor Mary

Dear Central Union 'Ohana,

I am so grateful for the time we have spent together serving God in ministry. You – each and every one of you – have blessed me in immeasurable ways. Since I was called to serve among you in 2018, I have learned so much from you. I have learned your personal stories and your communal history. I have learned from CUC staff and lay leaders what servant leadership looks like. And, we have certainly learned together what it looks like to be flexible, with the ups and downs of COVID and transition! Finally, I have been blessed to learn from you the deep and abiding depths of aloha. I struggle to put into words how much these lessons – and you – have meant to my journey and faith.

Please know that as I say aloha, you will never be far from my heart. My prayer for Central Union is that you will continue to be who you have historically been – a church of deep engagement with and service to the wider community. As Rev. Scudder wrote of Central Union in 1916, "From the beginning, the character of our Church has been intensely missional. Its aim has been to live for others rather than itself." May this continue to be true of you! May Christ's compassion and justice guide your decisions and ministries. May you take seriously God's call to care for those who are in need and stand in solidarity with those who are oppressed. And, may the Holy Spirit equip you to be Christ's hands, feet, heart, and voice in this island community!

I will always be cheering for you from afar! From the bottom of my heart, mahalo and aloha, Central Union 'ohana. ♥

Rev. Mary K. Herbig

Rev. Mary K. Herbig
Associate Minister

Please join us in saying mahalo and aloha to Pastor Mary as she concludes her time with Central Union. On her last Sunday, we will have one joint worship service with a special Service of Release and final message by Pastor Mary. Following the service will be a fun-filled farewell reception. ALL are welcome! Please RSVP for the reception. More info below:



CUPS keiki presented Pastor Mary with lei and cards at Chapel on March 12, 2025.

A Note about the Departure of Clergy

Once a pastor leaves a church, it is a part of the clergy code of ethics to refrain from connecting with former members for at least one year. The reason for this is to make space so new relationships can be forged. During this period of separation and no contact, Central Union will be able to build relationships with any incoming pastor and strengthen our relationship with Pastor Rushan. Likewise, Pastor Mary will be able to settle into her new call and build relationships with her new congregation.

Saying farewell and following this ethical guideline is difficult, and yet it is so important to make space for what God is doing among us! Please do keep this in mind as we move forward, as we respect Pastor Mary's need and desire to respect this vital code of ethics. Let's be sure to spend time with Pastor Mary and share our thanks before she departs!

LOVE NEVER FAILETH

ALOHA CELEBRATION

REV. MARY HERBIG

**Sunday
March 30, 2025**
Central Union Church

▶ **10 AM**
Worship • Sanctuary

▶ **11:30 AM – 2:30 PM**
Reception • Parish Hall

Please RSVP either online at bit.ly/aloha-mary or by phone (call **808-440-3004**) no later than **March 20**, and be sure to give the names and number of people you are RSVPing for.

Garden Club

Troy Tomita, Chief Operations Officer

February 27 was the first day of the Garden Club. We worked on a small area on the Ewa side of the Sanctuary. Joe Elm, Dona Hanaïke, Jon Fujita and I came out ready to get dirty. We were able to remove three palm stumps, one African Tulip stump, and a bunch of weeds. Joe and Jon did most of the digging to get these stumps out! We also relocated two croton plants for replanting on a future date. After softening up the area we planted more ti plants and fern. The area looks nice and clean and we can't wait to see it flourish in the future. With the remaining time, we did some pruning and clippings in the Admin Courtyard area. A great start.

Thanks to all that attended and especially to Dona for providing much of the ti plants and guidance.

We are looking forward to the upcoming weeks, where we will be taking on the back of the Sanctuary.

Many hands make light work, so we hope that you will be able to join us to help keep our campus looking beautiful!



Women's Retreat: Looking Back & Forward



After celebrating 35 years of the Women's Retreat in November 2024, women gathered at the church one Sunday afternoon last month to reflect and look ahead. They named the gifts of the retreat, including reconnecting with women, mentoring and wisdom, nature, cross-cultural enrichment, and outreach.

They will continue to prayerfully discern how to continue and support this worthwhile ministry into the future. Pictured are a few of the key leaders who have been involved in planning the retreat. More info will be shared in an upcoming issue of *The Spire*!



CU Youth



Celebrating a Baptism

Casey Jones has been a part of Central Union for almost her entire life. She attended the Preschool and is an active youth participant today. Even as a busy high school student-athlete, she often brings herself to church on her bicycle. Casey is journeying toward confirmation with our CU Youth and chose to be baptized by Pastor Mary who has watched her grow up over the years. With assistance from our Youth Director, an intimate baptism celebration was organized at the beach on Sunday, March 2. A number of church members, youth, church staff, even Casey's school friends and their families, came out to the beach to welcome Casey into the universal church and body of Christ!

Sharing Funds Raised | Melissa Thach, Youth Director

Last month, the Punahou parking fundraiser brought in around \$16,000. Several parents from the Children's Ministry came to help, so \$6,000 of that went to their ministry. The youth will donate 10% of their portion to Central Union's upcoming intergenerational worship opportunity: Messy Church on April 23. They also unanimously voted to donate a large portion of the remaining funds to community organizations that work on causes they feel passionate about (homeless or domestic violence shelters, victims of Maui and LA fires, and animal rescue). The rest of the money will go to offset the cost of youth activities to make them accessible to anyone who wants to attend!



GODLY PLAY STORYTELLER TRAINING

3 Saturdays • 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM

March 29 & May 3
Central Union Church
1660 S. Beretania Street

May 31, 2025
Epiphany Episcopal Church
1041 10th Avenue

Cost: \$50 (meals & materials included)
Register online: bit.ly/6Ptraining2025spring



Keiki Corner

Get ready for Compassion Camp 2025!

Children ages 3-11 are invited to join us from **July 21-25**, to learn more about growing and showing our compassion through action! Space is limited. FREE with suggested donation of \$40.

Register now! bit.ly/cuc2025compassion



Questions about these opportunities? Contact **Cayanna Herrera**, Director of Children's Ministries:
cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org

100 Days of Fun, Friendship, and Learning

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



Time has really flown by this school year. We can still remember the very first days of school when students would tentatively crawl out of the car during auto line or cling to Mom and Dad at the Gerell Gate. But now, we see our keiki flying out the door ready to meet their friends along the Sanctuary pathway, greeting each other with loud “hellos” and grabbing hands while eagerly rushing to class. Yes, time has passed in a blink of an eye!

And what better way to mark the passing of time than to celebrate all the days spent at CUPS? February 11 marked 100 days of school and our keiki enjoyed marking the occasion with water and foam play day, as well as educational activities, such as counting boxes to learn numbers one through 100.

And, there are so many more exciting things to look forward to once we return from Spring Break!

Central Union Church Preschool

Dazzle 2025

Friday, April 25, 2025
Alohilani Resort

5:00 pm - Dazzletini (Poolside)
6:30 pm - Program Start (Alohilani Ballroom)
8:30 pm - Live Auction
9:30 pm - End of Program

Purchase Tickets & Tables: bit.ly/DAZZLE25
Alohilani Room Block: bit.ly/DAZZLERoomBlock

(note: case-sensitive)

Get Tickets for Dazzle!

COMING UP: Central Union Church Preschool is excited to be hosting the 20th anniversary of **DAZZLE**, its signature fundraiser gala on **Friday, April 25, 2025**. The main program will start at 6:30 PM. This year's theme is *Reach for the Stars!* Enjoy a silent and live auction, tasting menus from 20 local renowned chefs, entertainment, and an evening of camaraderie at the beautiful Alohilani Resort in Waikiki. Dazzle is the Preschool's annual fundraiser gala that supports educational opportunities, environment, events, and most importantly, the tuition assistance program, which paves the way for the Preschool's diverse group of keiki.

For more information and tickets, go to bit.ly/DAZZLE25. General tickets are currently \$325 until March 31, then it will increase to \$375.

For questions or to become a sponsor/donor, please contact Alana Anderson:
alana@centralunionpreschool.org
917-623-5913



Support the Heifer Project

World Mission Ministry

Our World Mission Ministry is committed to supporting developing communities around the world, helping them build a sustainable future with hope. This Lenten season, we are inviting the whole church to join us in this critical work by participating in the Heifer Project!



Ark by Carolyn Loo
Central Union Preschool



Heifer International is a nonprofit dedicated to helping struggling families around the world lift themselves out of hunger and poverty by investing in local farmers and their communities. Through our partnership with the Heifer Project, you can give living gifts like goats or cows. Along with the animal, the family will receive training, feed, and support, so that they can develop their own source of income.

We are so excited to be partnering with the Preschool and hope you'll prayerfully join us in this work of blessing our siblings around the world, too!

We have set a lofty goal of raising \$5,000 and having 100 people engaged in the project!



If you'd like to participate, you can visit our **Living Gift Market** after any of the worship services (7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM) on **March 9 and 23** and **April 13**. You can also make your purchases online at bit.ly/lent25heifer (or use a smartphone

to scan the QR code above).

May God work in and through us this Lenten season!

Help us fill our ark!



LOOKING AHEAD

March 16: Service of Healing & Prayer - 5:30 PM

Young(ish) Adult Events

March 16: Brunch Bunch - 10-11 AM

March 22: Beach Day - 2-5 PM

March 23: Honoring Eleanore Chong, UCC Board Member • UCC General Minister & President, Karen Georgia Thompson, will be present at the 9 AM worship service.

March 30: 10 AM Worship • Aloha Celebration
Pastor Mary's last Sunday (one service & reception to follow - RSVP no later than March 20)

March 30: Lukas Hasler Organ Concert - 2 PM

April 3: Church Council Meeting - 5 PM

April 6: Jazz Vespers - 5:30 PM

April 9: Young(ish) Adult Dinner Church - 6 PM

April 12: Thrift Shop Rummage Sale

April 23: Messy Church - 5:30 PM - Parish Hall
 RSVP at bit.ly/messy42325

Sundays from 1-2 PM: 'Ukulele for Beginners
 with Wade Cambern in the Women's Building
 Keiki to kūpuna are welcome. Bring an 'ukulele.

Thursdays: Garden Club - 9-11 AM

Holy Week & Easter

April 13 Palm Sunday

April 17 Maundy Thursday - 5:30 PM

RSVP bit.ly/maundy2025cuc or 808-440-3004

April 18 Good Friday - 7 PM

April 20 Easter Sunday

2025 LENTEN BIBLE STUDY

JOURNEYING THROUGH THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

Led by Pastor Rushan

TUESDAYS

6:00-7:30 PM

March 11, 18, 25, April 1 & 8

THURSDAYS

11 AM-12:30 PM

March 6, 13, 27, April 3 & 10

Rewick Board Room, Administration Building
 CENTRAL UNION CHURCH

Sign up: bit.ly/cuc2025lent



Journey of wellness with Nani Elm,
*double board-certified, holistic health
 practitioner & lifestyle coach*

*Lamenting
 Lent*

Live, Love, Learn

*Nani's
 Lifestyle*



Saturdays of Lent
 March 8, 15, 22, 29
 April 5, 12
 10 AM - 12 PM

Sign up: bit.ly/lent-nani

VITAL STATS

Remembering our Saints ~ Please pray for the families of:

Harry Lane, who died on February 22nd. Service is pending.

Fred Brossy, who died on February 26th. Service is pending.

Eun-Ja Cho who died on February 28th. Service is on March 28, 5 PM in Atherton Memorial Chapel.

Welcome New Members!

On March 9, 2025 we received the following people into the CUC 'Ohana:

Angél Foster, Brian Foster, Karen Ho, Candy Li, Brandon Lin, Alvin Muramoto,
 Shirlee Muramoto, Jennifer Perkins, Woomi Perkins

Baptisms

In March 2025 we baptized many into the universal church and the body of Christ:

Casey Jones, Maika Mariota, Ethan Foster, Naomi Gutman, Rebekah Emelio

