

# THE SPIRE



Choirs of America  
Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i  
(aka Aloha State  
Choral Festival)  
*Read more  
on page 4*

Photo:  
Margaret Lloyd

Central Union Church and Preschool

April 2025

"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!" Vol. 95 - No. 4



## Something greater than us can save us

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

In just a few days we will celebrate Easter. The Easter story of the garden and the tomb that was empty is a strange story. I don't think we will ever know exactly what happened. But it has always carried a very clear message, summed up in the great Easter Greeting: **The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed.** We believe that Jesus Christ came back from death and remains alive in the world today. And what difference does that make to us, whether at our best or at our worst?

In our Lenten Bible Study we recently talked about how it seems like history just keeps repeating itself and nothing ever seems to change, and humanity never seems to learn from the past.

We have learned, when we look at the natural world, to observe its amazing power of renewal. Life on our planet is incredibly resilient and comes back after catastrophe over and over again.

But we have also learned that most of the serious, long-term devastation has been caused by human action. And, that we do have the power to permanently destroy our planet.

We have seen through history how political empires and civilizations rise and fall. None are perfect but there is a dream in us of a "Utopia;" a worldwide kingdom of justice and peace and many great leaders have sincerely tried to realize this dream. But we have also seen the long-term harm done by political oppression, colonization, ethnic cleansing. Remember how what was called the "war to end all wars" was followed by a second in little more than twenty years?

Christianity is accused of piling guilt onto people; of pushing them into a destructive self-hatred. But if we are going to save the world then we have to face up to the potential for destruction in ourselves. We cannot pretend that it does not exist. If the world is to be saved, then the human race has to be saved. And if the human race is to be saved then we have to acknowledge our capacity for evil and have some hope of salvation.

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And this, I believe, is what the Easter Story offers us. It shows us the worst that humanity can do. It is a tale of men and women in whom love, compassion, justice, hope, self-esteem have been crushed. And because so much good in them has been destroyed, they are wreaking horrendous acts of cruelty on each other. At the

hour of Jesus' crucifixion, we are told, darkness covered the whole land. And there was darkness in that nation, in that empire and in so many of those people.

Yet, there was still hope. Hope of forgiveness, hope of healing, hope of renewal. Because the Lord is risen. He is risen indeed. Something greater than us can save us.

The root of human evil is despair. We give up on life, we give up on ourselves, we give up on the world, we give up on other people. And so, we set out to punish life, punish others, punish ourselves.

Jesus Christ offers us hope because he offers us a God who thought us worth suffering for, despite the fact that we were the ones inflicting the suffering; he offers us a God who never gives up on us.

And this is the root of hope. Because God believes in us, we can believe in ourselves. And because we can believe in ourselves, we can believe in others. And because we can believe in ourselves and in others, we can believe in our nation and we can believe in our world.

# CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

From the Church Council meeting on April 3, 2025:

1. **Staffing Transitions:** Pastor Mary's last Sunday was March 30; Pastor Rushan will take a few months to carefully assess our direction as a church and what areas of ministry need attention before beginning the formal search process. In this time of transition, he will be the primary contact for ministries and committees that Pastor Mary worked with. In addition, Jon Fujita, who was responsible for managing booking of our facilities has also left us to pursue other opportunities. The PPRC, Pastor Rushan and Troy Tomita are working to determine the best way forward for filling Jon's position. In the interim, Troy (Chief Operations Officer) with the assistance of Jennie Scott (Organizational Manager) will be handling bookings for events. All facility requests go to Troy at the same address: [events@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:events@centralunionchurch.org).



2. **Festival of Homiletics:** Pastor Rushan will be on study leave attending the 2025 Festival of Homiletics in Atlanta, Georgia, May 12-15, 2025. The Festival of Homiletics is a gathering for pastors from around the country for the purpose of learning and conversing about preaching in a contemporary context.



3. **Arcadia Retirement Residence:** Arcadia Family of Companies is reworking their organizational structure. Arcadia Retirement Residence is seeking approval to change from a sole member organization to an organization run solely by its board of directors and not by any other entity. In recognition of the Church's historical connection to Arcadia and the Punahou Street campus, Arcadia would retain all provisions that distribute that campus to CUC upon the dissolution of Arcadia.

4. **Buildings and Grounds:** Please note, parking should not be allowed under trees to protect the roots. (Roots spread out the same distance as the tree line). The Windward campus cottage, now vacant following Pastor Mary's leave, will be inspected to assess the condition and determine future options, including repair or possibly teardown.

5. **Preschool happenings:** The admissions process is well underway. Enrollment for the '25-'26 Preschool program were sent out. Toddler acceptance notifications were emailed on March 31.  
DAZZLE 2025 is coming up this month!

6. **The Real Estate Committee** is restarting investigations/conversations with options that resulted from last year's meetings and will report back on findings in the coming months as the committee's diligence progresses.

**GET YOUR TICKETS!**  
*Reach for the Stars* at the 20th anniversary of **DAZZLE!** Central Union Preschool's signature fundraiser gala will be held on **Friday, April 25, 2025** at the Alohilani Resort.

**For more information and tickets, go to [bit.ly/DAZZLE25](https://bit.ly/DAZZLE25).** General tickets are \$325.

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



**DAZZLE 2025**  
Friday, April 25, 2025  
Alohilani Resort

5:40 pm - DazzleTini (Poolside)  
6:30 pm: Program Start (Alohilani Ballroom)  
8:30 pm: Live Auction  
9:30 pm: End of Program

Purchase Tickets & Tables  
Alohilani Room Block

[bit.ly/DAZZLE25](https://bit.ly/DAZZLE25) (note: case sensitive)  
[bit.ly/DAZZLERoomBlock](https://bit.ly/DAZZLERoomBlock) (note: case sensitive)



# Concerts and Choral Festivals

**Margaret Lloyd, Director of Music Ministries**

In the months of February and March, Central Union Church hosted five concerts and four choral festivals. All these events 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!

February 14-15

### ACDA-HI Nā Leo Hou

The American Choral Directors Association Hawai'i Chapter holds an annual adjudicated choral festival for high school students. This year's event included almost 400 students from 15 schools in our Islands. Adjudicators: Dr. Collin Boothby, HPU; Dr. Erica Glenn, BYU-HI; and Dr. Joshua Habermann, O'ahu Choral Society. Festival Clinician: Dr. Alec Schumacker, UH Mānoa. (pictured above)

March 15

### Choirs of America Nā Leo 'O Hawai'i

(aka Aloha State Choral Festival)  
This adjudicated choral festival by Choirs of America included 362 high school students in 11 choirs from AZ, CA, CO, MI, NV and Canada. This event also included hula immersion, taught by kumu hula Lauren Kanoelani Chang Williams. Festival Clinician: Dr. Joshua Habermann, O'ahu Choral Society. (pictured on the cover of *The Spire*)



March 21

### WorldStrides Heritage Festival

This adjudicated choral festival included 202 high school students and 34 middle school students in seven choirs from CA, FL, WA and Tokyo. Adjudicators: Mark Conching, The Sounds of Aloha Chorus and Dr. Erica Glenn, BYU-HI.



March 24

### Pacific Basin Music Festival

This 40<sup>th</sup> annual five-day choral and instrumental event on O'ahu included an adjudicated choral festival at CUC organized by World Projects with 76 high school students in three choirs from AK and CA. Adjudicators: Dr. Erica Glenn, BYU-HI; Aaron Scholtz, Waipahu High School; and Dr. Alec Schumacker, UH Mānoa.



March 30

### 20<sup>th</sup> Annual AGO Organ Recital

Since 2006, the American Guild of Organists Hawai'i Chapter has offered an annual recital featuring a "rising star" as a gift to the community. This year's artist was Austrian-born Lukas Hasler, a doctoral student at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles and one of the world's most successful organists on social media with more than 80,000 followers.

## EVENTS

Beyond the wonderful musical partnerships and connections made through these gatherings, our church campus also serves as an excellent venue for these events which generate important income for operations. Visit [centralunionchurch.org/events](http://centralunionchurch.org/events) for more information on renting our venues.

# Honoring Eleanore Chong

Longtime church member Eleanore “Elly” Chong was honored for her years of service in the wider church on March 23rd in our 9 AM service. Elly has ended her time as a board member of the United Church of Christ (UCC), a role she’s filled for over a decade. Serving on multiple boards and committees within our denomination, always involved in the life of the church, she’s been an example to so many who serve and continue to serve. The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, UCC General Minister and President, joined us to make a [special presentation](#) celebrating Elly’s ministry and also shared the sermon.

When asked what she would tell someone who knew nothing about the UCC, Elly answered, “We try to meet them where they are.” Elly shares that the UCC is the closest thing she knows to a democracy. The denomination seeks to address global issues in ways that are meaningful.



## Looking Back to Look Forward

### My Memories of the Start of the Women’s Retreat

**Marjorie Smith**, *Central Union Church Women’s Retreat*

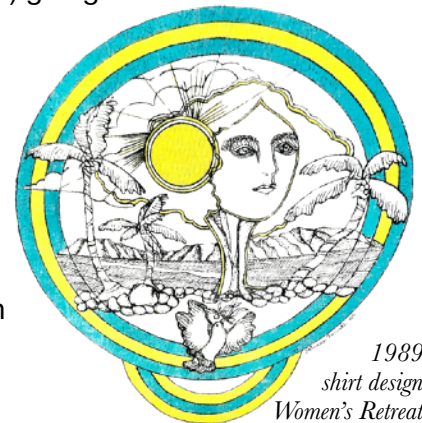
It all started with one woman—Martha Lee Mullen—and her Vision. She had attended a Women’s Retreat in California—a retreat that had dramatically enlarged and expanded her experience of Christianity. It was more than just believing. It was about experiencing the love of Christ in a multitude of small ways. Experiencing JOY. Women she had just sat next to in the pew shared their Faith Journeys. They shared how they had struggled and been helped by experiencing the Love that Never Fails. Stories of a new joy. Stories of a new way of seeing.

Martha Lee came home to Honolulu excited. She began to share her vision of creating a women’s retreat for all of us! One of the places she shared was at the Wednesday Morning Women’s Prayer Group. We began to pray with her about her vision. And it became our vision too. That was late 1987.

But Martha Lee did more than just share. She enlisted! It was “Come and See” just as Andrew had said to Peter about Jesus. And the Fall of 1988 saw two friends (Frannie Brossy and I) going with her to share the experience. It was everything she said and more.

We came home committed and began to gather more support. By amazing good fortune, Rev. Lauren Medeiros was on CUC staff. Not only was she a gifted musician, but she was just back from Texas where she had led local and regional women’s retreats.

We began regular meetings—open to anyone who was interested—envisioning what our retreat would look like. And having a whole lot of fun. We were off and running to create the first Women’s Retreat for Central Union in the Fall of 1989.



1989  
shirt design  
Women’s Retreat

## 2025 WOMEN’S RETREAT

As we look ahead to the future of the Women’s Retreat, after celebrating 35 years in 2024, we reflect on how it all started. We hope to hold it again this year, but it will depend on the interest. This year’s Women’s Retreat is planned for October 17-19 at Camp Mokule‘ia. **The Women’s Retreat is for ALL women.** If that’s you, look out for more about the Women’s Retreat and be ready to sign up early!

# CUPS hops into Spring!

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

The PTO left no stones unturned and put together, once again, an amazing Spring Event celebration for our CUPS keiki on March 14. Before the children set out for two weeks of Spring Break, the campus played host to a true Spring eggstravaganza!

Three sessions were set up across CUPS: Atherton Courtyard held the traditional egg hunt game followed by class photos with our Easter Bunny, courtesy of Storybook Entertainment. Each child was tasked with finding a specific number of eggs with the reward coming in the form of a Spring basket for everyone! They then rotated to the next station, the petting zoo on Parish Hall Lawn. Thanks to our friends at Paniolo Parties, the keiki enjoyed playing with an assortment of livestock, from bunnies to goats, bah-ing at parents and students alike. And from there, the Carnival inside of Parish Hall lent itself to a plethora of fun, Spring-inspired games and more treats for both our keiki and their siblings. No child was left out of the celebratory affair.

Mahalo to the PTO for their hard work and dedication to the children this whole year, never forgetting their duty to entertain and provide laughter, fun, and excitement. And a special thank you to all the parent volunteers, who spent their time putting together carnival games for the eagerly awaiting children.



## Farewell, Pastor Mary!

After six and a half years of serving our church and 12 years of ministry in Hawai'i, Pastor Mary has left us to embark on something new. On March 30th we gathered to celebrate her ministry and say mahalo and aloha. Friends from the wider Hawai'i Conference were present. There was singing, dancing (even hula by Pastor Mary herself), readings, reminiscing, sharing of all sorts, and great food of course.

**Many thanks to all** those who were there and helped to make Pastor Mary's last Sunday a special celebration and send-off!

# Journey with us through Holy Week

We invite you to join us at Central Union Church and draw near to God as we mark the pivotal events of Jesus' final earthly days — his entry into Jerusalem, the Last Supper with his disciples, his suffering and death on a Roman cross, and his glorious resurrection.



**Palm Sunday** marks Jesus' entry into Jerusalem for the Jewish holiday of Passover. As he rode on a donkey, the crowd spread cloaks and branches on the road before him. Worship with us at the usual **7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM services** and stick around for the **10 AM all-church Potluck and Petting Zoo!**

## Maundy Thursday:

The word "Maundy" is derived from the Latin word "mandatum" meaning "command" or "order" and relates to Jesus' commandment in John 13:34 — "...just as I have loved you, you also are

to love one another." Join us for a simple shared meal and reflective, interactive worship for all ages on **April 17 at 5:30 PM in Atherton Memorial Courtyard. [RSVP by April 14.](#)**



**Good Friday:** We reflect on Jesus' agony and death on the cross through music, readings, prayer and silence. The Service of Tenebrae, which means "shadows," is an extended meditation on the cross of Christ. Join us in worship on **April 18 at 7 PM in the Sanctuary.**



## Easter Sunday:

On this day, we join Christians of every place and time to joyfully celebrate Christ's resurrection. Alleluia! Christ is risen! "He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again."

Join Children's Ministry for their annual **Easter Eggstravaganza at 10 AM** on the Preschool lawn. Keiki are invited to bring a basket and

'hunt' for eggs, then exchange their eggs for a goody bag! Each egg collected will represent a monetary donation that will be made to Heifer International as part of our Lenten service project.

# LOOKING AHEAD

## April 12: Thrift Shop Rummage Sale

9 AM - 1 PM, Women's Building  
*Volunteers needed for setup and cleanup!*

## Holy Week and Easter (see page 7)

April 13: Palm Sunday Potluck + Petting Zoo

April 17: Maundy Thursday

April 18: Good Friday

April 20: Easter Sunday

April 23: Messy Church - RSVP by 4/18

5:30 PM, Parish Hall

April 27: Holy Humor Sunday in worship

## MAY 2025 - Sermon Series: LIMITLESS

*Living the Extravagant, Unconditional and Transforming Love of God in our Lives*

May 3 & 31: **Godly Play Storyteller Training 2 & 3**

8:30 AM - 5:30 PM, Epiphany Episcopal Church



*Space is still available to join in this amazing faith experience learning a special way of ministering to our children, youth, adults, and larger community. For more information, contact Cayanna Herrera at:*

[cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:cayanna-herrera@centralunionchurch.org).

May 4: Lei Day & PAAM (Pacific Islander & Asian American Ministries) Sunday

Jazz Vespers

5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Courtyard

May 18: Graduate Recognition Sunday

Service of Healing & Prayer

5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel

## VITAL STATS

### Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of **Karen Kiyabu**, who died on March 23, 2025. Services are set for Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at 5 PM in the Sanctuary.

### Baptisms ~

Recently baptized into the universal church and the body of Christ: Sofia Ho'omana Dallass, Chase Lowrey, James Garwood

The logo for Messy Church, featuring a cross with the text "CENTRAL UNION CHURCH" and "LOVE NEVER FAILS" around it, set against a colorful, splattered background.

# MESSY CHURCH

Wednesday, April 23, 2025 • 5:30 – 7:30 PM  
Central Union Church Parish Hall

CRAFTS • ACTIVITIES • FOOD • WORSHIP  
CREATIVITY + HOSPITALITY + CELEBRATION

RSVP: [bit.ly/messy42325](https://bit.ly/messy42325)

Looking for a place where faith meets fun and creativity knows no bounds? Join us at Messy Church! From keiki to kūpuna, Messy Church is a space for everyone to explore God's amazing creation in exciting and hands-on ways. From arts and crafts to story time, music, and food, there's something for the whole family. No matter who you are, no matter how old you are or where you are on your journey of life and faith, you're welcome to come, share, and grow with us at Central Union's Messy Church! Dinner will be served so please be sure to **RSVP by April 18**.

## Give a Living Gift this Lent!

A graphic for the Heifer Project Online Living Gift Market. It features a rainbow, a sun, and a boat filled with various farm animals (goat, pig, cow, horse, rabbit, lion). The text includes: "OUR GOAL: \$5,000 raised, 100 engaged", "HEIFER PROJECT ONLINE LIVING GIFT MARKET", and a QR code with the URL "bit.ly/lent25heifer".

OUR GOAL:  
**\$5,000** raised  
100 engaged

HEIFER PROJECT  
ONLINE  
LIVING GIFT  
MARKET

[bit.ly/lent25heifer](https://bit.ly/lent25heifer)

Visit the Living Gift Market after worship services on April 13 to make your contribution to our Lenten service project by our World Mission Ministry.