

LOVE NEVER FAILETH

# THE SPIRE



Fiery florals on Pentecost Sunday — red for the flames of the Holy Spirit orange for Wear Orange weekend during Gun Violence Awareness Month, remembering our call to be peacemakers...

*Lovingly arranged by Jean Yokoyama*

Central Union Church and Preschool

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

June 2025

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# What is our core business as the Church?

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

Friends,

We just celebrated Pentecost—it's one of the most powerful moments in our faith story. On that day, the Holy Spirit showed up in a big way, setting the early church on fire (not literally, but you get the idea!). It wasn't just about excitement—it was about purpose, it was about passion. It was about remembering what really mattered.

The early church didn't have budgets, fancy buildings, or elaborate programs. They had Jesus—and they knew that was enough. They focused on four core things:

- ❖ **Teaching**—sharing Jesus' words and learning how to live faithfully.
- ❖ **Fellowship**—showing up for each other, supporting, and encouraging one another.
- ❖ **Worship & Communion**—worshipping God and breaking bread together in community.
- ❖ **Prayer**—keeping their hearts connected to God.

That's it. Simple, but life-changing and world-transforming.

But let's be honest—sometimes we human beings overcomplicate things.

Howard Schultz, former CEO of Starbucks, realized his company had lost its way. They were selling stuffed toys instead of focusing on what mattered. Schultz called his leaders together and asked one crucial question: "What is our core business?" The answer was obvious—coffee. So, they went back to basics.

So, here's the big question for us: What is our core business as the Church? The answer?

Jesus. Knowing him. Sharing him. Living like him.

And our key resource for doing this is the Holy Spirit.

You see, Pentecost is so much more than a story—it is a wake-up call. Are we actually living out our mission? Are we prioritizing teaching, fellowship, worship and communion, and prayer? Are we showing the world who Jesus truly is?

The early church changed the world and changed history. So can we here in Honolulu in the year 2025 at a time when our world and our nation are facing serious challenges, struggles, turmoil and uncertainty.

This Pentecost, I want to challenge us here at Central Union Church to strip away the distractions and irrelevancies, lean into the Holy Spirit, and get back to what really matters.

Let's **BE THE CHURCH** here in Honolulu and beyond!

Blessings,  
Pastor Rushan





## Message from Our Church Council Chair

Aloha Central Union Church!

June marks Pride Month as members and allies of the LGBTQIA+ community across the country celebrate the ability to be authentically themselves. Central Union Church is proud to be a welcoming place for all to come as they are, and Central Union Church has participated in Honolulu’s Pride Parade, which takes place in October (during LGBT History Month), for several years.

Perhaps you will share my surprise then, that, despite our spirit of openness and affirming culture toward all, Central Union is not listed as one of the UCC’s “Open and Affirming” (ONA) churches. To be ONA, our church would have to formally adopt an ONA covenant, which is a public commitment to fully welcome and affirm LGBTQIA+ individuals into our life and ministry. Central Union has taken other formal steps; for example, the congregation passed a resolution supporting marriage equality at our church in 2014. However, our Church has never followed through with the steps to be ONA.

Our mission is to engage and embrace all, and we already include LGBTQIA+ individuals in all aspects of church life, including membership, sacraments, and leadership. Perhaps many of you, like I, incorrectly assumed that our church was already an ONA church. We are overdue to formally answer the question: should Central Union Church be ONA?

Do our church members share a common understanding of:

- ☀ What a welcoming environment is like for LGBTQIA+ individuals?
- ☀ How to create a space that makes individuals welcomed, valued, and promotes a sense of belonging and community?
- ☀ What discrimination, both historical and ongoing, against LGBTQIA+ in society looks like?

As Council Chair, I will make sure that members have the full opportunity to explore this question. The Council will establish a non-Council working group to discuss a potential covenant, to lead classes/opportunities to learn about queerness and explore how it relates to our faith.

What is the value or importance of being listed as an ONA church, especially if the church already takes steps to be open and affirming? First and foremost, it is about standing by our values. If this is who we are, shouldn’t others know that they will find a community with us?

Should you have any questions or comments, you can reach me by email at [council-chair@centralunionchurch.org](mailto:council-chair@centralunionchurch.org).

Mahalo,  
David Yee



# Youth Journey to Confirmation



**Melissa Thach**, *Youth Director*

When I was a kid I asked a grown-up in my church, "How do you know God is real?" The grown-up looked stunned and said something along the lines of "it's better to be safe than sorry." The message I received was that church was not a place to ask questions and I wrestled with them on my own for a very long time. It was not until I was in college, in Dr. Craig Keen's Systematic Theology class, that I found someone who not only welcomed my questions but also seemed to enjoy them! It was life-changing. Those experiences of someone trying to control my beliefs with fear and someone encouraging my questions without judgment have been the guideposts of my 20 years of working with children and youth. I never wanted kids to feel like they couldn't ask questions (sad!) or think I had all the answers (scary!).

Imagine my delight when it was explained to me that Confirmation in the United Church of Christ is different — that we don't hand a set of beliefs to the youth and say, "Believe this or you can't join the club!" Instead, we journey together through different belief systems and faith experiences, to gain a greater perspective on the ways people believe and worship. We ask questions and explore. And that is what we've done for the past year. We did a Central Union history tour, visited Kaneana Cave (thought to be the birthplace of man in Hawaiian legend), went to Ulupō Heiau, toured the Hawaiian Mission Houses, attended a bon dance at Palolo Hongwanji, and rang the Bon-Sho at the Byodo-In Temple. We volunteered at Serving Aloha, made genki balls for the Ala Wai project, donated money from our Punahou parking fundraiser to: help fire victims in Maui & California, support victims of domestic violence, "buy" farm animals from Heifer International, and support the Humane Society. We went to Kaua'i and spent time unplugged from our

normal lives and connected to the wonder of creation, sitting around a campfire and staring at the stars. We visited the Hindu monastery and swam in the water at Salt Pond Beach. We had Q&A sessions with church members at Central Union about their faith journeys and went to Godly Play with Ms. Cayanna. We attended a Shabbat service that featured a bar-mitzvah and went to a Mass at St. Augustine's by the Sea complete with a Tongan choir.



Then the youth wrote what they believe to be true about who God is, how God has called them to show up in the world, and then read them to the church on Confirmation Sunday (June 1).

***Read their faith statements on the following pages!***

What I am most impressed by with all of their statements is the commitment to show up in the world and love the people around them, regardless of their beliefs. The world desperately needs this kind of empathy and compassion and I'm so glad these youth have chosen to continue their faith journeys with us at Central Union. We are all the better for it.



# Faith Statements by Youth



## Zoe Lau

I started confirmation last year because I've had a lot of questions about God and what I believe, and I thought this would be a good way to explore that. When I was younger, I thought, "How can I wholeheartedly believe in one that I don't have scientific proof exists?" but I think I was

able to overcome that. Even though I can't prove it, I do believe that God is with me, and I trust that God will be there for me in times of need because I have had experiences that helped me see this.

There was a time when I had a group project for school and felt really lost. I fully believed that my group members were trying to erase the work that I did on the project and the time that I put in and claim it as theirs, but during this, I felt God's influence guided me to a more positive belief. God has been present a lot when I was sad and unsure of things, like when I felt put down. Many times, when I've felt sad or unsure, I've had a change of mindset, which tends to come out of nowhere. I think God was there helping me with the change of mindset and reminding me there are better things to focus on.

I believe that no matter what we do, God loves us and is there for us. I believe that being part of a church means we help others when we can, and are friendly to those both inside and outside the church. I am extremely grateful for those in my life who've helped me shape this journey so far; people like my parents and family, those working in the youth ministry like Ms. Melissa, and my peers. When I think about the kind of support I want as I continue on this journey, I just want people to be there for me when I'm down and when I'm not, and I would like to do the same for them. When I say support, I just mean general support, like just existing in the same space together, as I think this is really helpful.



I believe God has given me a really large belief and want to help others, so I would like to use it for volunteering more, no matter who, but especially with those younger than me, and some with similar interests, too. As I take the next steps on my journey, I want to be there for others regardless of their faith and grow my belief in God.



## David Looper

My confirmation journey was done with the intent of helping me figure out what I believe. Until this point, I had not really

considered it that much. I had always just gone along with it as part of this church or the chapel sermons in schools that I have attended. I have experienced the beauty of God's gifts through nature and have felt His love through the church but I had not really given it much direct thought. Now I think of how comforting the concept of there being something in charge of the chaos we experience, that there is a plan behind what

we go through. I had not considered how miraculous it is that the One who created all of these wonders, of nature, ourselves, and the universe, still loves us little beings.



Even as my distance from this church increases and my free time gets consumed by college, I shall still hold the teachings of this church within my heart. I feel truly blessed to have grown up in this community. I will go out and try to use the gifts that God gave me such as my perseverance, creativity, and

curiosity to bring joy to others through the stories, games, and other creations that I will learn to make, which I believe is the purpose of such gifts given to us.

# Faith Statements by Youth

## Casey Jones Stressman

I began confirmation because it was something the youth were doing and I wanted to be part of it. I've been a part of Central Union since I was in preschool. I've always liked the community at the church—and the way it made me feel. I thought whatever values and beliefs people had that would make them treat me this way is something I wanted to be involved in.



One thing I've seen a lot in different church communities is that people are often excluded because of who they love or how they identify—and that shouldn't be the point—but at Central Union everyone is accepted as they are. God loves us how we are and we don't have to fit a certain mold to believe or follow. We can be who we are, show up as we are and we're welcome. There are no weird stares or unwelcoming

feelings. There hasn't been a time in my life at this church when I felt unwelcome. And with the way the world is now, that is very special.

It is because of the way the people of Central Union have loved me that I'm in this pulpit today. My experience in this church is a big reason why I believe that God loves us—because I believe this community reflects that love to the people who walk in the doors, and the people around them in the community. I want other people to feel the love and care I've felt here.

I believe God is loving, caring, forgiving, and protective. I believe I have gifts that I can use to help others. While I wish God had gifted me mathematically, he hasn't and that's okay. My friends have told me they trust me to listen and not judge them and they appreciate that I don't push how I would handle a situation but let them process what they're going through. I have the gift of presence, and I think that's something I've learned here. I hope that I can live up to and live by the examples I've seen here.



My advice to anyone who doesn't know what they believe, or isn't sure they believe in God, is to spend time figuring out what resonates with you, and if we believe in different things, that's okay. One thing I've seen through confirmation is that there are lots of different paths, but most people just want to feel loved and know they're part of a community. Central Union feels like home for me, I feel safe, protected and loved and I want that for everyone. If it's not here, I want you to find that for yourself so that you'll live a happy and fulfilling life.

On June 1, Confirmation Sunday, we had one joint worship service in which the youth confirmands helped to lead the worship service, shared their faith statements, and assisted in serving communion.



# Register for Upcoming Events

## WOMEN'S RETREAT

All women are invited to gather with sisters of faith to relax in God's creation and renew our spirits. We'll spend a weekend together enjoying fellowship, deepening connections, and breathing in God's beauty on O'ahu's North Shore.

Join us at Camp Mokule'ia from **October 24-26**. We're encouraging registration by **June 30** to help with planning of this treasured tradition going on its 36th year!

Learn more and register online:  
[centralunionchurch.org/womens-retreat](http://centralunionchurch.org/womens-retreat)



## GOLF TOURNAMENT



Central Union Preschool is excited to host its **1st Annual Putting for the Stars Golf Tournament** on **Tuesday, September 16**, at the [Hawaii Prince Golf Club](http://hawaiiprincegolf.com).

All proceeds raised will go towards supporting the Preschool's 5 Es:

- ✿ **Educational Opportunities**
- ✿ **Environments**
- ✿ **Endowment**
- ✿ **Events**
- ✿ **Economic Diversity**—the tuition assistance program that paves the way for our unique and diverse group of children from across the island.



**Tuesday, September 16**  
**Hawaii Prince Golf Club**  
**4-Man Teams & Sponsorships Available**  
**Register Today**  
[bit.ly/puttingforthestars](http://bit.ly/puttingforthestars)

Learn more and register online!

[bit.ly/puttingforthestars](http://bit.ly/puttingforthestars)

Questions? Contact Alana Anderson

(917) 623-5913 / [alana@centralunionpreschool.org](mailto:alana@centralunionpreschool.org)

# LOOKING AHEAD

## VOLUNTEER THIS SUMMER!

**Serving Aloha food distribution** on Wednesdays  
(Youth volunteering June 18 through July 16)  
**Thrift Shop** on Wednesdays and Saturdays

**June 12-14: Hawai'i Conference 'Aha Pae'āina**  
Annual meeting on Kaua'i

**June 15: Trinity Sunday, Juneteenth, Father's Day**

**June 22 – August 31: Sermon Series**  
“Human & Holy: Influencers of Our Faith”

**June 28: Six Summer Saturdays at Sundown**  
Led by Nani Elm through August 2

**July 11-15: UCC General Synod 35**  
Pastor Rushan attending as moderator,  
away July 9-21 (Kansas City, MO)

**July 20: Christmas in July** - 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM  
Visit the shave ice truck from 9:45 - 11 AM!

**July 21-25: Compassion Camp** (Children's Ministry)

**August 10: Back to School Sunday**

**August 12: Blood Drive**, 8 AM - 2 PM

**August 21: Chancel Choir rehearsals begin**

**August 31: Laity Sunday** - 7 AM, 9 AM, 11 AM

## Six Summer Saturdays at Sundown\*

We invite you to join us in the Women's Building on June 28, July 5, 12, 19, 26, and August 2 at **\*SIX pm** for a Sensational **"Season" of Sharing**

**Things to bring to SHARE:**  
1. Someone (fellowship), 2. Scripture, 3. Songs, 4. Snacks (healthy kine), 5. Stories (testimonies), 6. Something to write IN and with for Journaling. We will be cleansing our "Sanctuaries" (bodies) And inviting the (Holy) SPIRIT to dwell within us.

This is a **safe space for ALL** where you can be **yourSELF** Facilitated by:



You may have noticed the beautiful new **paraments** in our Sanctuary, created by Olivia Ebsary of Stitchin' Time Designs in New York. Paraments are the liturgical hangings on the front of the pulpit and lectern. Pastor Rushan and Margaret Lloyd collaborated with Olivia on the designs. So far, we have white and red paraments and plan to order more in other liturgical colors over the next year. If you would like to contribute, please speak with Pastor Rushan or Margaret Lloyd.

## VITAL STATS

### Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the families of: **Joy Marshall**, who died on March 23, 2025; **Susan Hirano**, who died on April 18, 2025. Services are pending.

### Confirmed ~

Duly instructed in the doctrines of the Christian faith and having professed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, the following were received into full communion with Central Union Church on June 1, 2025: **Zoe Lau, David Looper, Casey Jones Stressman**

