



THE SPIRE

Central Union Church and Preschool August 2025
"We Engage and Embrace ALL as we seek to Embody Christ!" Vol. 95 - No. 8

Hawai'i Conference UCC
at General Synod 35 in
Kansas City, Missouri.

Photo courtesy of
Eric Anderson.



Pastor's Page: A Gift and A Responsibility



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

Dear Central Union 'ohana,

As I approach the end of my second year as your Senior Minister and as we continue to walk together in faith, I want to share some

reflections that have been stirring in my heart—especially after attending the 35th General Synod of the United Church of Christ. It was a powerful experience, one that reminded me of the sacred calling we share as a church and the unique gift of our congregational polity.

At its core, the church is called to be the living body of Christ in the world. We are called to worship, to witness, to serve, and to love. But how we live out that calling—how we make decisions, discern direction, and care for one another—is shaped by our governance. In the UCC, and here at Central Union Church, we practice a congregational polity, which means that authority resides not in a hierarchy, not in a single committee or a board, but in the gathered body of believers.

Attending General Synod 35 brought this to life in a profound way. I witnessed delegates from churches across the country—lay people and clergy alike—come together to pray, worship, debate, discern, and decide. It was messy at times, yes, but it was also beautiful. It was a living example of what it means to trust that the Holy Spirit speaks not just through a few, but through the whole body.

This model of being church has deep historical roots. It emerged during the Reformation, when believers began to question centralized authority and instead emphasized the autonomy of the local church and the priesthood of all believers. Congregationalists believed that each church, under the guidance of Christ and through the movement of the Holy Spirit, could faithfully discern its mission and ministry.

That legacy continues today. In our church, every member has a voice. We vote on our leadership, our budget, our mission priorities. We covenant together—not just to attend on Sunday morning, but to participate. This is not just a structure; it's a spiritual practice. It calls us to listen deeply, to speak truthfully, and to act faithfully.

General Synod reminded me that this way of being church is both a gift and a responsibility. It requires us to show up—not just physically, but spiritually. It challenges us to be informed, prayerful, and engaged. And it affirms that our collective discernment, grounded in love and guided by the Spirit, can lead us forward in faith.

As we continue our journey together, I pray that we embrace this calling with joy and humility. May we honor all the voices among us, seek unity in our diversity, and trust that Christ is truly present when we gather in His name.

Blessings,

Pastor Rushan

H I G H L I G H T S



Rev. A. Rushan Sinnaduray, Senior Minister

Nearly 2,000 United Church of Christ clergy and members came together for the 35th General Synod, a week filled with worship, discussions, and decisions on important spiritual and moral issues. Our Senior Minister, Rev. Rushan Sinnaduray, served as Moderator for this Synod. The theme for this General Synod was "Into the Deep," encouraging us to explore and embrace the depths of our faith and mission. Over several days, we listened, debated, and voted on 11 significant resolutions that reflect our values of inclusion, compassion, and faithful witness.



Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, our General Minister and President, gave a heartfelt [State of the Church address](#) and a powerful [Sunday sermon](#). She asked us to honestly reflect on who we are and who we're becoming as the United Church of Christ. She

acknowledged our challenges, like shrinking numbers and financial issues, but also called us to be imaginative, innovative, and boldly engaged with our communities. We're not just managing decline; we're figuring out how to be the church in new ways.

We were inspired by Rev. Jennifer Butler, founder of Faith in Public Life, who delivered a [stirring keynote](#). Her message was clear: Don't lose heart. We're built for this moment.



Delegates passed a resolution to keep evolving our language around [mental health](#), encouraging churches to break stigma and foster inclusion.

Two historic resolutions established full communion with the [Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland](#) (EKD)—the Protestant Church in Germany—and the [Iglesia Evangélica Unida](#) de Puerto Rico. These partnerships are based on shared theology, mutual respect, and global solidarity. Another important vote recognized the needs and gifts of [small town and rural \(STAR\) churches](#), giving them official standing in the wider church's life and leadership.

Staying true to our justice-seeking identity, the Synod took bold stands on global and domestic human rights. Delegates called for an end to the

genocide in [Palestine](#), affirmed human rights in the [Philippines](#), and condemned the persecution of Christians in [India](#). Two more resolutions urged the federal government to restore full funding and autonomy to [USAID and the Voice of America](#), recognizing their importance in global development and truthful media.

One of the most visible acts of public witness was the Church's [protest](#) against federal attacks on immigrants, migrants, and refugees—a deeply faithful expression of our call to "welcome the stranger." That [resolution](#) passed with strong support.

Additionally, a resolution to merge all four UCC Conferences in Pennsylvania into one unified [Keystone Conference](#) was approved, reflecting the evolving nature of church structure in response to changing needs. However, not all proposals moved forward—notably, a major change to the [UCC's bylaws](#) did not pass, leaving room for continued dialogue and discernment.

General Synod is where the Holy Spirit moves among us—not always with easy agreement, but always with faithful engagement. The Church is alive, dynamic, and committed to doing God's work in this world. Our challenge is to continue to try to live into these resolutions with courage and compassion in our local churches and communities.

Looking ahead, the 36th General Synod will be held in Cleveland, Ohio in 2028 and will include a celebration of the UCC's [70th birthday](#).





Compassion Camp

Cayanna Herrera, *Director of Children's Ministries*

Fifty-three smiling keiki joined us on July 21, the first day of Compassion Camp! Over the course of the week, we averaged between 52 and 55 children all experiencing the fun of camp while learning to grow and share compassion. Our theme for the week was "Be Kind, Be Loved, Be You" and we learned how to share compassion in an invitation to gather 'At the Table'. Then we learned how to go 'To Our Neighbor' and to be brave enough to love, to have love and compassion 'For Myself', to help others 'Along the Way', and share our compassion 'With the World'. We sang, shared stories, made crafts, played games, and completed a community service project where we created gratitude bags for those in our community who serve us every day by making deliveries to our homes! It was a truly fabulous week and we are looking forward to next year when we will once again gather for Compassion Camp!



Left: **Making care packages for UPS workers**

Right: **Chalk messages to Serving Aloha volunteers**



Back-to-School Blessings

Students, teachers and administrators were invited to bring their school bags to worship on August 10 for a special back-to-school blessing! Whether learning or teaching in the classroom, operating the office, serving in the cafeteria, running the library, getting active on the field or court, driving the bus, keeping the campus clean, helping with homework . . . we pray for ALL those who do and support the sacred work of learning!



Backpack tags saying “**BE KIND**” were given out as a blessing to carry throughout the school year!



Welcoming Our New Soprano Soloist

Margaret Lloyd, *Director of Music Ministries*

The CUC Music Ministries Department is excited to welcome Miranda Saenz as soprano Soloist!

By way of introduction: **Miranda Saenz**,



mezzo-soprano, has been

passionate about singing from a young age. She began formal voice training in 2014 and has since nurtured her vocal artistry through years of study and performance. Miranda holds a Bachelor of Music in Education with a concentration in choral-vocal studies and is currently pursuing a Master of Arts in Music Education. She taught middle school choir from 2020 to 2021 and elementary general music from 2021 to 2024, experiences that have deepened her dedication to music education. Her mission is to bring the joy and power of music to her communities in any capacity, fostering meaningful musical experiences for all. Miranda's responsibilities at CUC will include solo work; singing with the Soloist Ensemble and Ke Aloha Pau 'Ole; and serving as soprano section leader with the Chancel Choir. Join me in welcoming Miranda to our choral ministry and worshipping 'ohana!



Soloist Ensemble: Miranda Saenz, Ezinne Dawson, Brett Keniston, Dr. Christopher Kelsey



Honoring Scholarship Awardees

On Sunday, August 3, the CUC Women's League held a reception, open to all, in honor of this year's scholarship awardees. Two of the scholarship recipients were present—along with one awardee's sister who filled in as the awardee was studying abroad. We got to learn about them and hear their plans and goals for the future. What a blessing it is to be able to play a small part in supporting their continued education! Of the 19 total awardees, one received the Ruth C. Scudder Scholarship and 18 received scholarships from the Kenneth O. and Doris A. Rewick Educational Aid Fund. There were several recipients that couldn't attend the reception but shared messages of thanks which members of our CUC youth group helped to read aloud. Read excerpts from their messages below!

"I wanted to thank the scholarship committee and all of you supporting me and my fellow graduates — helping us move towards our goals, and I'm excited for what comes next. I'm blessed to have these opportunities representing the 808 state and sharing the aloha spirit while away at college." —Logan R.

"If all goes to plan, I will eventually return to Hawai'i where it all began, using my work to protect our natural systems.

The cost of college has always been a worry of mine, and I have been saving paychecks for it since I was 14. Now, entering my first semester, I can proudly say that my first year of college will come at an affordable cost to my family. That would not be possible without the incredible support of local outside scholarships. So, I would like to give a big MAHALO to the Kenneth O. and Doris A. Rewick Educational Aid Fund Committee; your support means the world to me." —Rain H.

"My long-term goal is to return home and start a nonprofit that supports children growing up in households affected by addiction. There are so many kids on the island facing instability and

being overlooked by systems that don't have enough resources to help. I want to be someone who shows up for them and makes them feel like they have a purpose. . . . I truly believe we can use our experiences, especially the hard ones, to create change in our communities.



Thank you again to the scholarship committee. This award really helps ease the financial burden of paying for my own education and brings me closer to pursuing my dreams. I'm incredibly grateful." —Shyloh M.

Read more and view the full list of 2025 CUC scholarship awardees online:
centralunionchurch.org/2025-scholarship-awardees

REMINDER! Annual Meeting on September 7, 2025



The 2025 Annual Member and Budget Meeting of Central Union Church will be held on

Sunday, September 7, at 11 AM in the Parish Hall following ONE in-person worship service at 10 AM in the Sanctuary. A quorum of 100 Members is required to conduct business so, Members, please make your attendance (in person or via Zoom) a priority. Every Member participating in person or online shall have the right to vote at the Meeting. In-person attendance is encouraged for those who are able. The following will be on the meeting agenda:

- ✓ **Approve the Minutes** of the September 8, 2024 Annual Member & Budget Meeting;
- ✓ **Approve our Budget** for the new fiscal year (August 1, 2025 to July 31, 2026);
- ✓ **Receive reports** from the Treasurer of the Council, the Chair of the Council, and the Senior Minister; and
- ✓ **Elect** new officers and members of the Council. (Grant Itomitsu, Jocelyn Pratt, and Nathan Wong have been nominated to serve as **At Large Council Members**. Learn more about the nominees in the past issue of [The Spire](#), July 2025.)

The 2024-2025 CUC Annual Report will be made available prior to the Annual Meeting—emailed to members (with hard copies available by request).

THE WOMEN'S RETREAT IS ON!

Join a community of women at Camp Mokule'ia for the annual Women's Retreat! From **October 24-26**, all women are invited to gather with sisters of faith to relax in God's creation and renew our spirits! It's a great opportunity to deepen connections and take a moment of rest and retreat. NOW is the time to make your reservation. We can't wait to see you! Learn more and register online:

centralunionchurch.org/womens-retreat



Troop 777 Recruitment Open House

Do you know a boy who thrives being outdoors and loves adventure? Encourage him to join Boy Scouts!

For over 100 years, the Boy Scout program has helped create generations of leaders and outstanding citizens by allowing boys to explore their interests, serve their communities, and discover their talents through youth-led activities like hiking, camping, and volunteering! Troop 777 is hosting its annual Recruitment Open House on **Friday, October 17, 2025** at 6:30 PM in the Central Union Church Diamond Head Music Room. If you are interested in attending or learning more about Scouting and Troop 777, please contact our Membership Coordinator at membership@troop777.org.



LOOKING AHEAD

August 17: Congratulating Connie Uejo
10 AM, Women's Building

August 20: Messy Church (*ALL ages welcome!*)
5:30-7:30 PM, Parish Hall
RSVP online: bit.ly/82025messy

August 21: Chancel Choir rehearsals begin
Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 PM, Music Room
All singers are welcome!

August 24: Young(ish) Adults Brunch Bunch

August 24: Aloha Kit pickup - 7, 9, 11 AM services
The youth will have prepared care packages that church folks can keep in their cars to share with unhoused neighbors they meet who may be in need.

August 31: Laity Sunday
7, 9, 11 AM services
Preaching: Dusty Santos
"From Palace to Passion"



September ~ Annual Stewardship Campaign

September 7
10 AM, Sanctuary - **ONE worship service**
11 AM, Parish Hall - **Annual Meeting for Members**

September 7: Jazz Vespers
5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel & Courtyard
Jazz Vespers is starting up again and continues on the first Sunday each month through the end of 2025. September's theme, "Lift Every Voice", celebrates liberation, inclusion, and radical hospitality.



September 17: Young Adults Dinner Church

September 20: Godly Play Reunion

September 21: Service of Healing and Prayer
5:30 PM, Atherton Memorial Chapel

September 28: Stewardship Sunday

Remembering our Saints ~

Please pray for the family of **Betsy Turgeon**, who died on July 30, 2025.



CUC member and staff musician Constance Uejo is retiring from the Hawai'i Symphony Orchestra after an extraordinary 44 seasons as principal harpist.

Her musicianship, mentoring and commitment to music in Hawai'i have created an incredible legacy. Please join us next **Sunday, August 17, at 10 AM** in the Women's Building to congratulate Connie and celebrate the artistry that she has shared with so many in our Island community!



MESSY CHURCH

Wednesday, August 20, 2025 • 5:30 – 7:30 PM
Central Union Church Parish Hall

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

RSVP: bit.ly/82025messy

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 help us by **RSVPing!**